

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AFRO-AMERICAN SLAVERY IN COASTAL GEORGIA:  
A REGIONAL PERCEPTION OF SLAVE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY PATTERNS

BY

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by

Theresa A. Singleton

Dedicated to the memory of my father, William E. Singleton, Sr.

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A variety of methodological and theoretical orientations has been utilized in the study of Afro-American slavery. Regional approaches are not new to slavery, but few studies have examined the impact of local ecological factors upon slave lifeways within a narrowly defined area. In this study, coastal Georgia (the barrier islands and the adjacent deltas) provides the region for the exploration of an ecological approach to slave life and material conditions. Specifically, slavery at a rice coast plantation is compared with slavery at long-staple cotton plantations. Archaeological data provide the primary basis for interpretation, and historical resources are used to supplement the archaeology.

Primary settlement patterns and subsistence data recovered from the Butler Island rice plantation in 1978 and 1979 are used to investigate slave life and material conditions on the rice coast. The Butler Island data are compared with the archaeological data recovered from several previously investigated slave sites of long-staple cotton plantations. The comparison reveals similarities as well as differences in the



slave lifeways of the two cash crop regions. Archaeologically, the differences are primarily discernible in slave community organizations, the natural resources exploited, and slave crafts. Similarities are evident in most household artifact patterns: plantation food rations, food preparation equipment, personal possessions, and leisure-time activities. It is suggested that the differences in slave life reflect the dissimilarity between the habitats where rice and long-staple cotton were produced. On the other hand, the similarities may reflect general labor management practices adapted for the production of coastal staples.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The anthropological study of Afro-American slavery has increasingly used archaeological data as a primary source for interpretation. Because traditional historic sources are subject to problems of falsification and bias, archaeological data are frequently used to supplement historic records. It has been suggested that archaeology be the key to writing the cultural history of the "inarticulate" (Ascher 1974:10-12). Slavery sites have been investigated specifically for this reason. As a consequence of the widespread illiteracy among slaves, few documents written by slaves exist. Most of our understanding of slavery has come from accounts written by whites. Inferences derived from the archaeological record of slavery can provide insights into slave lifeways and slave worldview. Although planter records, travelers' accounts, and oral interviews are used extensively here to supplement the archaeological record, this study assumes that archaeological data are one of the best indices of slave behavior.

The purpose of this study is to offer a model capable of discerning slave behavioral patterns in coastal Georgia. Slavery on the Georgia coast was characterized by distinctive demographic, environmental, economic, as well as historical factors which were absent in the interior. Undoubtedly, these conditions affected the quality of slave life, slave activities, and ultimately the development of slave cultural patterns.

At present, slave sites from coastal Georgia are perhaps better known than those from any other regions of the Old South. In recent years, a number of slave sites have been identified, located, and excavated in this area. Until now, no attempt has been made to synthesize these archaeological findings within a framework larger than the single plantation.

Archaeological investigations undertaken at the Butler Island plantation in McIntosh County, Georgia, provide the first archeological evidence of slave life at a Georgian rice plantation. All reported excavated slave sites in Georgia are former long-staple cotton plantations on the barrier islands. Thus, the significance of the Butler Island research is twofold: first, it supplies archaeological evidence for the specific adaptations of slavery to rice culture; second, comparisons of the Butler Island data with data from long-staple cotton slave sites indicate several identical patterns. This evidence suggests that the cultural system of slavery which developed in coastal Georgia exceeded adaptations to specific cash crop requirements.

Ultimately, the goal of this dissertation is to identify and offer possible explanations for slave community and household patterns. This objective is accomplished through the analysis of primary settlement and subsistence data recovered from Butler Island slave sites. Comparative data from other coastal slave sites provide additional evidence for regional interpretations. The theoretical orientation of this study is derived from regional archaeology, which utilized an ecological approach in the interpretation of cultural phenomena.

### Regional Analysis in Archaeology

Systematic approaches toward the organization of archaeological data within temporal and spatial frameworks have been undertaken in archaeology for most of this century. Although early regional studies lacked the sophisticated methodology and theoretical orientations of recent years, large amounts of archaeological data were collected for many states and regions in the United States (Hole and Heizer 1977: 13-14). These data have provided the basis for regional chronologies, cultures, and the frameworks for the "more-analytic causally-oriented approaches" of today (Adams 1968:1188).

The concepts and methods for the regional analysis of the "new archaeology" have been derived from geography. Stated simply, the region is a "part of the earth's surface which is distinguished in some defined way from the surrounding area." This distinctiveness may be based upon a single criterion or upon a number of criteria (Grigg 1967:464). The objective of regional analysis is to understand spatial associations within the confines of a specified geographic area and eventually within a hierarchy of larger areas (Berry 1964, 1968; Isard 1956; Haggett 1965). Its methodology utilizes probability sampling and multivariate mathematical techniques for the identification, interpretation, and explanation of spatial organization.

Recent applications of regional analysis to archaeology have resulted in a trend toward replacing the single site as the unit of archaeological analysis with a larger entity, the region. Presumably, the importance of a single site cannot be sufficiently understood taken out of its regional context (Piog 1978). Lewis Binford was the

first to define this usage of regional archaeology:

the detailed and systematic study of regions that can be expected to have supported cultural systems. The extent of such regions will vary because it is recognized that cultural systems differ greatly in the limits of their adaptive range and milieu. As cultural systems become more complex, they generally span greater ecological ranges and enter more complex, widespread, extra-societal interaction. The isolation and definition of content, the structure, and the range of a cultural system together with its ecological relationships may be viewed as a research objective. (1964:426)

Central to the above definition is the view that culture is an adaptive system. As an anthropological concept, adaptation refers to the ability of a population to adjust to the environment by developing effective social and technological structures. Adaptation is an ecological process (Steward 1955:30). The interaction between human behavior and the environment in which culture is the mediating variable is fundamental to ecological approaches in anthropology (Harris 1968:659). Cultural ecology as a research strategy involves three procedures: first, it analyzes the interrelationships between technology and the environment; second, it analyzes behavioral patterns involving the exploitation of a particular area (the region) by a particular mode of technology; third, it ascertains the extent to which the behavior patterns involved in exploiting the environment affect other aspects of culture (Steward 1955:40-1). The utility of regional analysis in cultural ecology is very clear. As the locus occupied by a cultural system, the region provides the unit of analysis for ascertaining human ecological relationships.

Because the region is the locus of human activities, regional archaeology requires the investigation of diverse activity areas within

the geographic area occupied by a cultural system. It assumes that the region, not the single site, embraces the total range of behavioral variability for a population. The single site, on the other hand, reflects only those activities that had taken place at that specific locality (Streuver 1971:11). Thus the goal of regional archaeology is to determine patterned interrelationships among sites.

Regional archaeology attempts to understand the cultural and environmental processes which have effected behavioral patterns. Its application to historic site archaeology is slowly emerging. Specifically at historic sites, artifact pattern recognition (South 1977, 1978) has been suggested as a technique of discerning behavioral variability within a region or time period. Ultimately, pattern recognition seeks to identify by means of archaeological data the functional and behavioral processes which have taken place at sites (South 1978: 223; e.g. Lewis 1977).

Besides a unit of analysis, regional archaeology also supplies a method for the study of site location. Locational analysis examines spatial relationships about ecological or cultural phenomena (Haggett 1965). A developing focus of locational analysis is its application to historic sites (Swendlund 1975; Langhorne 1976; House 1977). Such studies attempt to determine the importance of cultural or natural resources within the functioning of a historic cultural system (House 1977:243-4).

A third concept of regional archaeology establishes a framework for the collection of cultural data for a defined area. The regional plan or overview is the first phase in multi-phase

archaeological research. Frequently, regional plans are used as planning devices in cultural resource management (King et al. 1977: 145-173; McGimsey and Davis 1977:47; Schiffer and Gummerman 1977: 121-131). As planning tools, regional plans involve the review of all known records of the project area, including historical records, survey and excavation reports, and other existing field data as well as informant consultation. The overview should summarize the present knowledge, evaluate the available evidence, estimate the resource base, and attempt to forecast long-range regional development and ongoing destructive processes (Schiffer and Gummerman 1977: 12-13). Although regional plans are only as good as our present-day knowledge permits (Glassow 1977), their utility as rudimentary planning tools is essential in historic preservation.

From the above discussion four concepts of regional archaeology are identified. The first is a unit of analysis which represents the broad cultural milieu of human activities for a cultural system. The second is a method of discerning spatial organizations within a cultural system. The third is a framework for the collection and synthesis of cultural and ecological data within a defined geographic area. Finally, the fourth is the explanation for the patterns thus defined.

In this study, the first, third, and fourth concepts provide the orientation for analysis and interpretation. Coastal Georgia, specifically the barrier islands and the adjacent river deltas, forms the geographic parameter. The temporal parameter is the nineteenth century (1800 to 1861). The unit of archaeological analysis for the investigation of the slave system is the slave community site.

The slave village or community site was the locus of most slave activities. Admittedly, slaves spent considerable time in the fields and at other locations of the plantation complex. But it is doubtful that these sites will provide archaeological data relating to slave behavior. Another site perhaps central to the slave belief system is the slave graveyard. Because of the sensitivity involved in excavating burials, this archaeological resource is not treated here. Slave graveyards, however, were at least located at Butler Island. Because of the restricted movement enforced upon slaves, the slave village site should embrace a major portion of slave behavioral variability. It also preserves evidence for a broader range of cultural activities than does a simple activity area such as a rice field or threshing floor.

A methodological departure of this study from regional research strategies advocated by Binford and others is the degree of use of probability sampling at all levels of analysis (Binford 1964). Probability sampling is used in this study but minimally. Additionally, the multivariate techniques of geographers are not used at all. Admittedly, this methodological departure may present some serious disadvantages in offering regional interpretations. The purpose of this study, however, is to synthesize the presently available data recovered from slave sites in coastal Georgia. The interpretations offered here are tentative and, hopefully, will be tested in future regional studies utilizing regional methods.

#### Regional Approaches to the Study of Slavery

Defined cultural, spatial, and temporal variables form the parameters for most discussions of Afro-American slavery.



Cross-cultural comparisons of slavery are often concerned with the issue of slave treatment within the confines of political entities (e.g. Tannebaum 1949; Davis 1966; Degler 1971). Similarly, in the United States discussions of slavery are confined to geographic areas such as states (e.g. Flanders 1933) or time periods (e.g. Stamp 1956). Both comparative studies and those within the United States are frequently concerned with slave management or the legal aspects of slavery. Less often has the issue of slave behavior been addressed. When it has, the entire slaveholding South has formed the unit of analysis (e.g. Blassingame 1972; Genovese 1974). It is questionable whether these discussions are applicable to slavery everywhere in the Old South.

Although the slave cultural system which developed in the South was characterized by general behavioral patterns (Gutman 1977), local variations of this tradition were inevitable. Evidence of this has been indicated in many localized Afro-American traditions, some of which have survived until the present day. The coastal areas of Georgia and South Carolina have been focal areas of African retentions (Herskovits 1958:120), and in the development of distinctive Afro-American traditions, particularly in the decorative arts, language, cuisine, and music.

Certainly the quality of slave life must have varied regionally. Although this assumption remains untested, indications from archaeological resources are that the material standard of slaves in coastal Georgia was better than that of slaves documented elsewhere in the Old South (MacFarlane 1975; Otto 1975). Further, a recent study of

slave nutritional adequacy indicates that slaves in the coastal areas of South Carolina, Georgia, and northeast Florida were adequately nourished (Gibbs et al. 1980). These studies demonstrate that regional approaches in the study of slavery are needed.

It is possible that certain economic, environmental, and demographic conditions in coastal Georgia favored a distinctive development of slave behavior. In Georgia, the largest percentages of blacks to whites were found on the coast. In addition, the most valuable farms, the largest slaveholding, and the most livestock were located there. Another factor was the value of lands and buildings per farm. This was highest on the coast than in any part of Georgia (Flanders 1933:81). Ecologically, the region provided abundant plant and animal resources which were exploited for both domestic and industrial purposes. Employment of the task slave labor system on most coastal plantations allowed slaves more time for recreation and to improve their material lots than the gang labor system employed elsewhere in the Old South (see Otto 1975). For the most part, these conditions were not present in the interior. It is likely that variations in these conditions produced variations in slave behavior.

Historic factors were also important. Unlike their counterparts of the short-staple cotton belt, most planters that came to coastal Georgia were experienced slaveholders from the West Indies or South Carolina (Vanstory 1970:74-79; Davis 1976:132). They were presumably acquainted with the problems of slave management. Conceivably, they attempted to establish the best possible conditions for a "stable regime within which their slave could live" (Genovese 1974:6). Perhaps,

this was why the plantations of the Georgia coast have been described as "patriarchal" (Wylly 1910:12; Lewis and Huie 1974). Another contributing factor was the infrequency in which planters of the coast migrated to the new lands of the West. With a few exceptions, slaveholders on the coast of Georgia established their roots in the late eighteenth century and remained there until the Civil War. It was "only in the tide-water areas of Georgia [that] wealth [had] matured for several generations" (Boney in Coleman 1977:174). This may have been the result of special local ecological factors.

This study assumes that the previously described variables substantially influenced a development of slave behavior patterns peculiar to the Georgia coast. Some of these patterns are believed to be archaeologically discernible. These archaeological indices are discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

### The Archaeology of Afro-Americans

Archaeologists have become increasingly involved in the investigation of sites formerly occupied by black Americans. Because few historic sources have been written by blacks, this research interest developed out of a need to expand upon traditional interpretation of past black American lifeways. Contemporary eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts relating to black Americans were written by whites. As a result, these are often very prejudiced views of Afro-American cultural life. The major objective of Afro-American archaeology has been to investigate aspects of black American life not available in documents.

With a few exceptions, archaeological studies of black Americans are of two types: slavery sites and northern free black sites. Because of the preliminary quality of this research area, most of these studies have been more descriptive than interpretative. Within this year, however, an attempt has been made to synthesize the findings from several Afro-American sites (see Schuyler 1980). From these studies and other published works, two themes dominate this research interest: first, the search for African retentions in black American material culture (Schuyler 1980:2), and second, the recognition of Afro-American subsistence patterns.

It was the search for material correlates of African survivals as well as subsistence information which initiated preliminary testing at the Kingsley slave site by Fairbanks in 1968 (Fairbanks 1974). Unfortunately, "no surely African elements" were identified (Fairbanks 1974:90). Since that time studies of slavery sites in the Old South have been directed toward the definition of subsistence patterns associated with the socioeconomic status of slavery (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971; MacFarlane 1975; Otto 1975; Drucker and Anthony 1979).

Investigations of slave burials in Barbadoes have provided very convincing evidence of Africanisms (Handler and Lange 1978, 1979). At the Newton plantation, the orientations of slave bodies and the associated burial goods are indicative of West African burial patterns. Burial practices peculiar to Afro-Americans in the United States have been reported but only at sites occupied by freed blacks (Cate and Wrightman 1955:207-215; Combes 1974; Crosby and Emerson 1979).

Perhaps, the most striking and yet controversial evidence (see Schuyler 1980:2) of Afro-Americans attempting to recreate their African past has been uncovered at the Parting Ways site (Deetz 1977:135-154). This site near Plymouth, Massachusetts, was occupied by four Revolutionary War veterans from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. Deetz suggests that the settlement pattern, house floor plans, a utilitarian earthenware, and possibly the culinary practices are derived from an African past.

The recent suggestion that black Americans influenced and manufactured some Colono-Indian ceramics (Ferguson 1980) is another example of this search for African survivals. These ceramics occur in high frequencies at seventeenth- and eighteenth-century southern sites, specifically in the coastal areas of the Carolinas (Ferguson 1980). Previous to this suggestion, these ceramics were thought to have been made exclusively by native Americans (Noel-Hume 1962). It is well documented that some of these ceramics were made by native Americans and some are still made by them today. Indications that blacks may have had a hand in the manufacture of these ceramics include the possible similarity of this ceramic style with West African ceramic traditions, the infrequency of Colono-Indian ceramics at historic Indian sites, and its high frequency at black occupied sites (Ferguson 1980). But the fact that Colono-Indian ceramics have been uncovered, in most cases, where native American populations were nearby\* makes the suggestion that blacks manufactured these ceramics uncertain.

---

\*Charles H. Fairbanks, personal communication 1979, Gainesville, Florida.

The archaeological investigation of African survivals at Afro-American sites has resulted in very little definitive evidence to date. This may be the result of a number of factors. Although his discussion is specifically directed to slavery sites, Otto details three processes that limited the re-creation of African materials. These include (1) selection and simplification, (2) availability and substitution, and (3) differential acculturation (Otto 1975:375). It is very likely that northern free blacks also substituted traditional items with available ones. The archaeological record is another factor. African-styled artifacts such as wooden objects or basketry are not likely to be preserved (Otto 1975:382). Regardless of the reason for the scarcity of African-styled artifacts at black-occupied sites, research designed solely to uncover Africanisms ignores the fact that Afro-American culture, like all cultures, is an adaptive system (Schuyler 1980:2).

A data base of Afro-American subsistence patterns is slowly emerging from diverse archaeological resources. These data are crucial to generating future hypotheses regarding Afro-American cultural patterns. A major problem has developed in the identification of Afro-American economics. To what extent are the subsistence patterns at black sites indicative of Afro-American ethnicity or a culture of poverty (Kelly and Kelly 1980)? Only when archaeological data are available from poor white subsistence farmers can the archaeological visibility of low-status Afro-Americans be ascertained (Baker 1978). Presently, these nonplanter whites are archaeologically unknown.

The archaeological evidence of slavery, however, may not be as difficult to recognize as are other Afro-American sites. Recently, an excellent attempt was made to identify an undocumented site as a slave site at Spiers Landing in Berkley, South Carolina (Drucker and Anthony 1979). Although Handler and Lange (1978:228) conclude that archaeological data do not identify the slave status or slavery, the Spiers Landing example refutes this. To suggest that slavery sites can be identified entirely from archaeological remains is very premature at this stage of research. This objective, however, may be realized in the future through the use of regional approaches to Afro-American sites, particularly the utilization of pattern recognition techniques.

Finally, in their discussion of ethnic identification in historical archaeology, the Kellys recommend the use of regional research designs (1980:135-6). They suggest that research designs geared toward the recognition of ethnic cultural patterns within a defined region may aid in the delineation of geographic variations of a broad cultural tradition (1980:130). The delineation of a geographic and temporal variation of a broad Afro-American cultural tradition is precisely the objective of this study.

#### Problems and Hypotheses

From the available reports, it appears that slave sites are known better archaeologically in coastal Georgia than in any other region of the Old South (see Figure 1, for the location of these sites). Despite this knowledge, these studies have suffered from three major

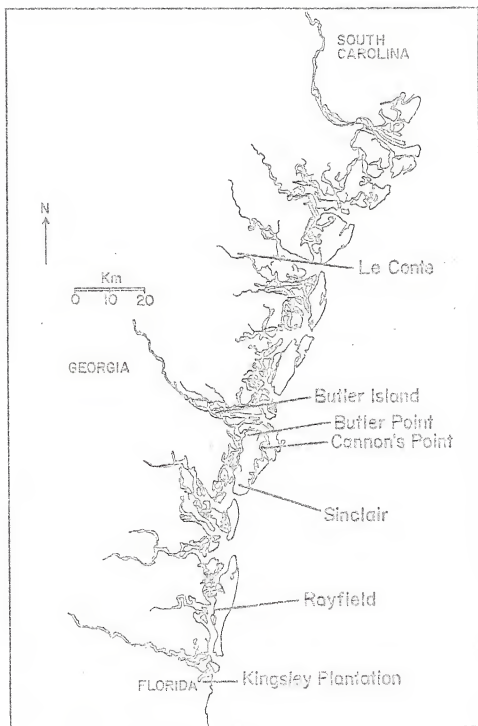


Figure 1. Investigated Slavery Sites in Coastal Georgia.



limitations: first, with the exception of one study (MacFarlane 1975) excavations of slave settlements have sampled only a small portion of the site, usually one or two structures (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971; Fairbanks 1974; Otto 1975). Second, as a result of this sampling, archaeological evidence of the internal social organization within the slave community has not been uncovered. Third, slave sites investigated have been exclusively from long-staple cotton plantations. Comparative data from the other dominant cash crop of the coast, rice, have been lacking.

Investigations at the south end slave cabins at the Cannon's Point plantation on St. Simons Island, Georgia (MacFarlane 1975) were the first attempt to excavate an entire slave community site. This investigation provided details of slave housing, household items, clothing, personal items, and food resources. Little or no data, however, were reported regarding the community organization, specialized crafts, or social hierarchy.

Documentary resources of the Butler Island rice plantation indicate that each slave settlement had plantation drivers, craftsmen, cooks, as well as field laborers. It was hypothesized that testing an entire slave community should uncover archaeological evidence of these specialized roles and status differences. Initially, the objective of archaeological investigations at Butler Island was twofold: first, to uncover archaeological evidence of status difference and craft specializations within the slave community; second, to compare the archaeological resources of slavery at a rice plantation with those of long-staple cotton plantations, in an attempt to ascertain similarities and differences

in slave life from two cash crop sites within a narrowly defined region.

It became apparent in the field that the time needed to investigate the first objective was insufficient for the time and funds available for fieldwork. As a result, attention was then directed toward uncovering archaeological evidence associated with the slave community plan. Presumably, settlement and certain subsistence data would provide archaeological evidence for the special adaptations of slavery to rice cultivation. At the same time, comparison of the Butler Island data with long-staple cotton plantations would supply additional evidence of slave life which exceeded adaptations to cash crops. In other words, the comparison would provide data specifically related to the economic function of the plantation on one hand and data which were not so related on the other hand. Further, it is hypothesized by the author that similar artifact patterns occurring in both crop loci are indicative of the material conditions of slave life and slave behavior patterns in a larger coastal Georgia area.

The factors which are believed to have influenced a distinctive development of slavery in coastal Georgia have been briefly discussed. It is important, however, to define more accurately their role in the development of coastal slavery. The demographic, economic, and historic factors (see pages 9 and 10) are all related to plantation management practices. These management practices developed out of an adaptation to the coastal environment of Georgia. Although the habitats for the cultivation of rice and long-staple cotton are very dissimilar, both habitats are part of a larger ecosystem (Johnson et al. 1974). Thus, this is a study of adaptation on two levels: adaptation to

specific crop requirements and adaptation to a more generalized coastal environment.

The purpose of this dissertation is to test the following hypotheses and their implications:

Hypothesis A: Slave community and household patterns in coastal Georgia reflect adaptations to the specialized habitats where tidewater staples were produced. Archaeologically this will be identified in the following:

1. Patterned placement of slave village sites relative to habitats.
2. Community plan of spatial arrangements
  - a. Specialized buildings and material culture
  - b. Nonstructural features
3. Slave dwellings
  - a. Size and available space
  - b. Construction details and materials
4. Farming implements and specialized crafts
5. Nondomestic plant and animal resources exploited

Hypothesis B: Slave material conditions and behavior patterns reflect management practices adapted for coastal Georgia. Archaeologically these will be identified in the following household artifact patterns:

1. Food-related activities
  - a. Food preparation equipment and techniques
  - b. Food serving equipment
  - c. Domestic plant and animal food resources

- d. Evidence of food supplements in plantation rations
  - 1. Equipment for producing food
  - 2. Equipment for procuring wild food resources
  - 3. Food processing equipment
  - 4. Remains of food supplements
- 2. Personal possessions
  - a. Clothing
  - b. Accessories and ornaments
  - c. Household items
- 3. Leisure-time activities
  - a. Smoking equipment
  - b. Games and toys
  - c. Miscellaneous items

These hypotheses and their underlying assumptions are discussed in greater detail in later chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 provide background information on the coastal environment of Georgia, the production of rice and long-staple cotton, and the archaeological and historical investigations at Butler Island. Slave community organizations at Butler Island are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 describes the slave material culture recovered from Butler Island. Slave artifact patterns derived from statistical pattern recognition techniques are presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 discusses the results from testing the hypotheses and the conclusions for the study.

## CHAPTER 2 PLANTATION AGRICULTURE IN THE GEORGIA TIDEWATER

### Environmental Summary and Introduction

Tidewater refers to the geographic area of the coastal plain, which is affected by the influence of the tides. In Georgia, this region includes the barrier islands and extends approximately 75 kilometers inland to the point where extensive areas of pine forests begin to occur (Crook 1978:28-30) (see figure 2). Three major subdivisions characterize the Georgia tidewater: the strand section, the salt marsh and lagoon section, and the delta section. These are discussed in detail elsewhere (Larson 1970; Johnson et al. 1974), and are briefly summarized here.

The strand borders on open ocean and is composed of beach and dunes. It is the most rapidly changing of the three sections. Vegetation is restricted and most animal resources which occur there are found more frequently in other habitats along the coast.

Of the three subdivisions, the salt marsh and lagoon section is the most ecologically diverse. It is composed of four habitats: marsh, tidal creeks, hammocks or highlands, and freshwater swamps. As a result of its diversity, this section is rich in both plant and animal resources. The food chain begins in these salt marshes. Several species of fish, shellfish, turtles, and waterfowl thrive in the marsh and tidal creeks. The hammock forest community includes several

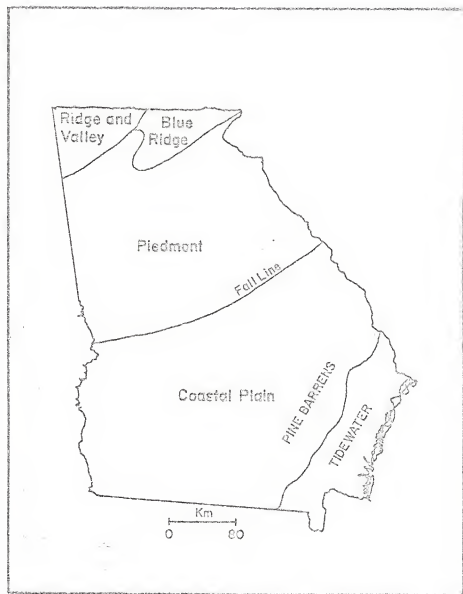


Figure 2. The Physiographic Regions of Georgia.  
(Adapted from Coleman 1977.)

species of oak, pignut hickory, red cedar, southern magnolia, cabbage palm, wax myrtle, saw palmetto, and many herbs and vines. Faunal resources in these highlands are also abundant. Whitetail deer, opossum, raccoon, and cottontail rabbit are among the dominant species. The freshwater swamp is an important breeding ground for reptiles and amphibians, and the dominant vegetation is cypress.

Fewer data are available for delta ecology than the other sections. The delta embraces those areas where freshwater rivers enter saltwater. Deltas are primarily freshwater but are affected by the tides. The area is flat and is frequently inundated. Most vegetation is water-tolerant. Near the ocean, the area is a grass-covered marsh; where there is little or no intrusion of saltwater, the delta is composed of cypress swamp (Larson 1970:35). Much of this swamp was cleared for rice cultivation. Deer, otter, and raccoon occur in portions of the delta, but the most distinctive faunal resources are the anadromous fish such as glut herring, striped bass, sturgeon, and the American shad.

The narrow belt of the tidewater, which includes the barrier islands and the adjacent river deltas, is part of the oldest agricultural region of Georgia. The sandy loams of the sea islands were the "most productive lands" of the coast. During the colonial period, these lands yielded crops of corn, indigo, potatoes, and vegetables. After the Revolutionary War, these lands were devoted almost exclusively to the production of long-staple cotton (Bonner 1964:1).

By the late eighteenth century, reclamation of the wet, alluvial deltaic soils for rice cultivation had begun. Tidewater rice culture was limited to the areas located far enough upstream to avoid contact

with saltwater but close enough to the ocean to be affected by the tide (House 1954b:23). The restricted spatial limits of tidewater rice culture made the alluvial soils of the delta the "most valuable" of this old agricultural region (Bonner 1964:2).

In general, most plantations on the barrier islands were devoted to long-staple cotton and those of the delta to rice. Some rice, however, was grown on the barrier islands, presumably in the freshwater swamps, and some cotton on the delta. Sugar, a third important cash crop (see Sitterson 1937, 1953:31-35), was frequently produced at both, but in smaller quantities. For example, at Butler Island, considerable quantities of cotton and sugar were cultivated, although rice was the island's major cash crop.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the historical development of plantation agriculture in the Georgia tidewater, specifically as it relates to the production of rice and long-staple cotton, the two dominant crops of the post-Colonial period. Also, planting and processing methods and marketing for each crop are described. Rice culture is considered in greater detail for two reasons: It was a more involved process than that of cotton culture and a detailed description of this culture is central to understanding the archaeological resources of Butler Island (long-staple cotton is treated extensively in another archaeological report—see Otto 1975:51-61).

#### The Emergence of the Plantation System in Georgia

On June 9, 1732, the developers of Georgia, known as the trustees, were granted a charter for the lands between the Savannah and the



Altamaha Rivers. The trustees desired to establish a colony with small settlements of independent farmers (Bonner 1964:2). To obtain this objective, the trustees prohibited large land grants and Negro slavery. The plantation system was outlawed for several reasons. First, the colony was purportedly founded for debtors, although debtors made up fewer than a dozen of the settlers during the entire trusteeship period (Spalding in Coleman 1977:18). A large portion of the early settlers to Georgia, however, were small businessmen, farmers, tradesmen, and unemployed laborers (Coleman 1976:36-54), who could not be expected to compete with a planter class. Second, Georgia was selected by the trustees to produce commodities needed by England, such as silk, which was not adapted to plantation agriculture. Third, the colony was to serve as a military buffer to protect Carolina from the Spaniards in Florida. Plantations would spread the people over the land instead of concentrating them into settlements. Moreover, a large slave population could subject the colony to slave insurrection, making it vulnerable to Spanish attack (Potter 1932:116-117; Calloway 1948:30-31).

From the very beginning some colonists objected to the restrictions placed upon Georgia. These "malcontents" were particularly displeased with the prohibition of slavery. They were convinced that the use of a cheap labor force was the only way to develop the colony. As dissatisfaction grew, many colonists abandoned Georgia. On the brink of economic distress, it became apparent to the trustees that if the colony was to succeed it must be made attractive to potential colonists (Davis 1976:126). Finally, in 1750, slavery was made legal. But, discouraged by their failures, the trustees surrendered their charter to the British Crown in 1752 (Spalding in Coleman 1977:44).

Under royal government, the colony experienced an accelerated growth. A significant source of immigration to the coastal area was the South Carolina planter. South Carolinians were aware of the rice growing potential of the Georgia tidewater areas, and they migrated to Georgia with their families and slaves (Milms 1972); rice soon became Georgia's most important crop. Later, the introduction of indigo gave the plantation system an added boost (Spalding in Coleman 1977:52).

Planters were attracted to the coastal lands, but good lands were not abundant. Moreover, the development of these lands was very costly. An eighteenth-century observer in coastal Georgia estimated that the initial expense of settling a rice estate was about \$10,000, and for cotton or indigo \$9,000 (Thayer 1957:81). Consequently, only large, wealthy planters could afford to acquire and cultivate these lands. The small planter unable to compete settled further in the interior. Thus, coastal Georgia became a region of a few, wealthy planters shortly after the emergence of plantations to the area (Calloway 1948:47-49).

The Revolutionary War brought disastrous setbacks to the coastal plantation economy. The bounty on indigo formerly received from the British government ceased and the exportation of rice declined. Prosperity was restored, however, with the successful introduction of long-staple cotton in 1786. Planters of rice plantations acquired land and equipment for cotton production. Thus, rice was temporarily displaced as a major staple of the tidewater (Flanders 1933:55-57).

By the mid-nineteenth century, the reliance upon sea-island cotton gradually shifted to rice. Apparently, this change roughly coincided with periods of depressed long-staple cotton prices (Gray

1941:38). During this time of renewed rice interests, Carolina planters intensified their activities in Georgia. They not only increased their acreage in the old rice producing areas along the Savannah (see Clifton 1978) and Altamaha Rivers, but also expanded further southward to include the Satilla and St. Mary's Rivers (see Figure 3). In the 1850s, cotton prices were on the upswing (Gray 1941:739) and rice cultivation was at its peak (Hilliard 1975:65). Planters producing both crops were enjoying sizeable profits on the eve of the Civil War. Devastation from the Civil War prevented the successful revival of either culture in the post-war years. The reign of rice and long-staple cotton as the dominant cash crops of the coast had come to an end.

#### The Rice Industry

Early experiments with rice cultivation were attempted in colonial Virginia, but rice was first established as a staple in the South Carolina low country (Gray 1941:277). Although the details of its introduction remain unclear, apparently early promoters of the colony encouraged rice cultivation shortly after the founding of Carolina in 1670. By 1695, South Carolina's rice industry had begun (Salley 1919).

#### Rice and Slavery

Methods of rice cultivation during most of the plantation era were entirely dependent upon hand labor. As a result, large-scale rice production required an enormous labor force. By the mid-nineteenth century, approximately 15 laborers were needed to cultivate 100 acres of rice land or 6 to 7 acres per hand (House 1954a:151). Presumably, colonial practices demanded greater labor requirements. For example, the average

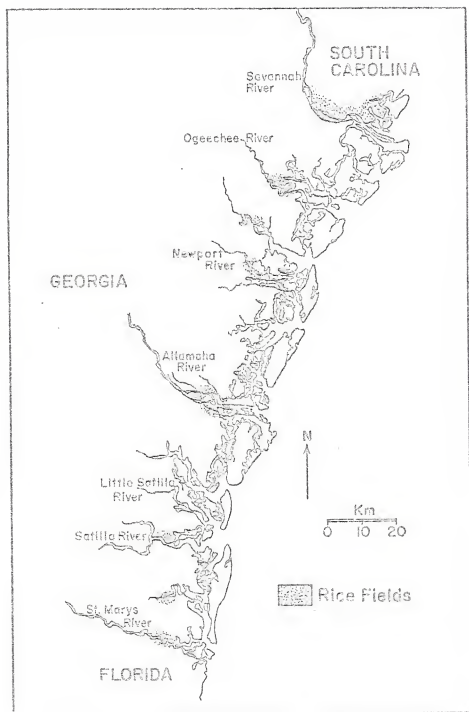


Figure 3. Extent of Rice Cultivation in Georgia by 1860.  
(Adapted from Hilliard 1975.)

rice plantation in colonial Georgia had an average of 48 working hands, but the average acreage was not recorded (Flanders 1933:43).

Given this labor requirement, a demand for African slave labor developed. Prior to 1695, most slaves in colonial South Carolina had come there with their masters from the West Indies. These Afro-Americans made notable contributions to settling the frontier of South Carolina (Wood 1974:27-34). It was the rice industry, however, which established a need for black slave labor. As the new staple became profitable, considerable quantities of Africans were imported (Wood 1974:57). Africans were thought to be better equipped to labor in rice fields than either indentured whites or Indian slaves for several reasons (Wood 1974:37-42). Perhaps, two of the most significant were the African adaptability to the swampy lowlands and the African knowledge of rice growing.

Malaria thrived in the stagnant, swampy lowlands where rice was cultivated (Childs 1940:32). Settlers to the Carolina-Georgia coast frequently complained of the prevalence of "fevers." Malaria or "intermittent fever" was considered to be the worst among these, particularly during its pernicious season in the Spring and Summer (Childs 1940:33).

Only in recent years has medical research shown that populations exposed to malarial climates display a genetic trait which produces a partial but heritable immunity to the disease. This trait, referred to as "sickle-cell trait," is not harmful in itself, but if present in both parents can produce offspring who suffer from sickle-cell anemia and are likely to die in adolescence (Wood 1974:80; Savitt 1978:27-28).

People who are heterozygous for the sickle-cell trait are evidently better able to survive and reproduce in a malarial region (Weiss and Mann 1975:356). In the United States, studies have shown that a high incidence of the sickle-cell trait presently exists among the "Gullah" Negroes of the South Carolina and Georgia coasts. This finding suggests that Afro-Americans in these former rice-growing areas have perpetuated this genetic characteristic (Gunn 1975:5).

Given the medical knowledge of the day, it is doubtful that rice planters understood the sickle-cell trait. It appears, however, that some planters observed fairly early that blacks were less likely to suffer from malaria and other diseases prevalent in swampy lowlands than whites (Postell 1951:74-75; Savitt 1978:22-24), which established a preference for black labor in rice fields. Thus, it is clear that the Negro's adaptability to the coastal environment partially contributed to the tradition which defended Afro-American slavery on the basis that blacks were more suitable to perform work whites were unwilling to do (Gunn 1975:6).

Another possible explanation for the preference of African labor in the cultivation of rice was the African knowledge of rice growing. Historians have overlooked this possibility until recently. Primarily, through the pioneering efforts of Peter Wood, a preliminary investigation of this suggestion has been undertaken (see Wood 1974:55-62).

Rice planting and processing involved obstacles to Europeans, since they were generally unfamiliar with rice culture. Unlike Europeans, Africans from several regions in West Africa were successful rice producers (Wood 1974:58-59). In fact, some West Africans were

cultivating rice as early as the fifteenth century (Lauer 1969:17). A preference for slaves from rice growing regions of West Africa was established early by white Carolinians. These areas included the Congo-Angola area (Heyward 1932:172-175), Senegambia area (Clark et al. 1962:226-239; Lauer 1969:47-48), and the "Windward" or "fold" coast of present-day Sierra Leone and Ghana (Corry 1960). Slaves from the rice coast of Africa were advertised by many firms. Between 1732 and 1765, Charleston alone handled "53 ship loads from Gambia and 29 from the Gold coast" (Lauer 1969:48).

Additional evidence for the presence of slaves from West African rice growing areas is provided by the prevalence of African personal names. The names "Banyun," "Bram," and "Bu'lunda" among slaves and their later descendants on the Carolina-Georgia coasts strongly suggest that the people from the rice growing areas of Senegambia were represented among the slave imports (Lauer 1969:48).

Besides the actual physical labor, Afro-Americans made significant contributions in the planting and processing of rice. The motions used in planting rice seeds such as the pressing of a hole with the heel and covering the seed with a foot were also practiced in West African rice planting. The flat, wide, coiled winnowing baskets were made by slaves and were typical of West African ones both in style and techniques of manufacture. Methods of pounding and polishing rice by hand were possibly told to white planters by their African slaves (Wood 1974:61-62).

Other factors, however, may have established a need for African slave labor. Briefly, these include the abundance of black labor,

the difficulties posed by the enslavement of Indians, and the insufficient supply of indentured whites (Wood 1974:37-48). Despite the fundamental role these factors contributed to the existence of African enslavement in the New World, it is suggested that the practical advantages offered by African physical adaptability and African knowledge of rice growing fostered the Carolina-Georgia rice industry.

#### Methods of Irrigation and Planting Rice

Two different species of rice were cultivated in the Southern United States: lowland rice, Oryza sativa, and upland rice, Oryza mutica. Lowland rice, a marsh plant, required an abundant supply of water for ripening (Austin 1893:9). Of its many varieties, "goldseed" rice and "white" rice were cultivated in the lowland areas of the Atlantic Seaboard (Knepp 1900:5). Upland rice was grown by dry culture in various hilly areas of the cotton belt. It was not a commercial crop, but grown essentially for home use (Gray 1941:723).

Lowland rice was probably first grown in moist soils without irrigation (Gray 1941:229). Around 1724, irrigation was employed in what were called "inland swamps." These were small fields adjacent to freshwater streams. The rice fields were irrigated with water stored in reservoirs formed by dams. After irrigation, the water was drained through ditches into streams. Because the water supply in the reservoirs was dependent upon rainfall, the crop was subject to either frequent floods or drought, often making yields small and uncertain (Heyward 1937:12-16; Wilms 1972:50-51).

By the late eighteenth century or perhaps earlier (see Wilms 1972), rice planters began to recognize the advantages of cultivating



on the tidal swamps to permit the inflow of freshwater backed up at high tide and the outflow at low tide. The fields could be flooded and drained as desired (Cole 1927:599). But before the tidal marsh could be cultivated, it had to be cleared, diked, and drained. Reclaiming the tidal swamp was a tremendous undertaking which required considerable expertise and its completion often took several years (Heyward 1937: 18-20; Wilms 1972:53; Hilliard 1975:60).

The innovation of transforming a marshland into a piece of cultivable land, a polder, cannot be credited to the tidewater planter. Construction of polderlands has been undertaken since ancient times, and today they are located all over the world (Wagret 1968). Perhaps, the best known are those of Holland. In fact, indications are that several Carolina-Georgia tidewater planters employed Dutch expertise in designing their hydraulic systems (Doar 1970:13; Scott 1973:73-74; Johnson 1930:61).

Articles describing the construction of the irrigation systems used by tidewater rice culture are found in several contemporary journals (e.g. Allston 1846, 1854; DeBows Review 1847; Spalding 1845). Several secondary sources have provided additional details for this procedure (e.g. Heyward 1937; House 1939, 1954b; Gray 1941; Doar 1970; Hilliard 1975). In very general terms, the procedure for constructing a tidewater rice irrigation system involved six major steps. First, the length and width of the required acreage was measured off and the trees were cut down and moved out of the way. Second, a temporary ditch and embankment were built around the entire area to keep water out, while tree stumps and debris were removed; third, the ditch was filled and

elevated to form the permanent embankment. Fourth, small channels were bridged and the trunks were installed. (Trunks were the devices which controlled the water flow.) Fifth, individual fields 12 to 22 acres were laid out. (Each of these fields could be filled or drained individually.) Sixth, these larger fields were subdivided into plots of  $1/4$  or  $1/8$  acre to aid the water movement (Gray 1941:726-727; Doar 1970:9-13; Hilliard 1975:59-60). These smaller subdivisions, sometimes referred to as "tasks" (Gray 1941:734), provided not only drainage but also the standard measurement for certain labor requirements (House 1954a:153). Thus, the basis for the task labor management system, which was used extensively in the cultivation of tidewater staples, was derived from the small segments formed by the irrigation system used in rice culture (Stampf 1956:55).

Regular maintenance of the irrigation system was essential in order to keep the fields in proper working order. The ditches and drains were thoroughly cleared of mud and trash annually (Austin 1893: 18). Breaks in the embankments caused by storms, high tides, and "freshets" or floods were frequent, despite precautions taken to protect the outer embankments (Spalding 1830; Southern Agriculturalist 1834). In addition, small animals including rats, snakes, and crayfish often made holes on the outside of the bank which very often became leaks and then breaks. If left unattended, these small breaks would interfere with the drainage system (Doar 1970:30). Such breaks and leaks had to be mended, and "ditchers" or "bank menders" (Heyward 1937: 236) were engaged regularly in repairing dykes.

Usually the annual cycle began in the fall and early winter with the "breaking" of the soil. This was done by hand with heavy hoes. Plows were used by some planters, but the small subdivided rice fields and the numerous ditches made plowing difficult. Moreover, many fields were not dry enough and draft animals were expensive to maintain (Gray 1941:729; House 1954b:27-28).

Planting occurred beginning in the middle of May, depending upon the weather (Austin 1893:19). Techniques varied among planters, but either of two methods was generally employed. In the traditional method, "covered rice" seeds were carefully sowed in trenches measuring 3 to 4 inches wide, 2 inches deep, and 13 to 14 inches apart. After sowing, the trenches were covered with 2 inches of soil by hoes, rakes, or covering boards (Gray 1941:727-728). The other method, "open trench," required that the seeds be coated in clay before sowing. Upon completion of sowing, water was let in the open trenches without covering them with soil (House 1942a:188). Open trench planting was not widely used in Georgia. It was apparently developed by South Carolina planters in an attempt to increase yields from exhausted soils (House 1942a).

Once the seed rice was planted, inundation of the fields was needed at various stages of growth. Irrigation practices, like planting methods, varied according to the planter. All irrigation, however, was utilized for three purposes: the initial flow or sprout flow was applied to aid the seed in sprouting; subsequent flows known as stretch flows were applied to keep down the growth of grass, weeds, and other pests; and the final or harvest flow strengthened and supported the stalks bearing ripened grain before the rice was harvested (House 1954b:3).

A number of pests preyed upon the growing rice (see Austin 1893: 31-37 for a detailed discussion). Two of the most frequently mentioned were volunteer rice and rice birds. Volunteer rice or "red rice" was the product of seed from the previous year which remained in the soil and sprouted with the new crop (Austin 1893:23). A few of these red grains among the white rice were believed to seriously lower the quality of the crop. Consequently, planters carefully selected the seed rice and had slaves to remove these self-planted sprouts whenever they were detected (Gray 1941:729). Rice birds presented another serious problem for they often consumed large portions of the crop. These birds were unavoidable since they appeared in May for approximately two weeks and then re-appeared in September for the same length of time. Some planters planted in between May and September, but yields were small (Heyward 1937:31-33). Most planters, however, employed "bird minders" to frighten the birds away with gunfire, noise, or decoys (Heyward 1937:32; Gray 1941:729).

#### Harvesting, Milling, and Marketing

Rice was harvested by hand sickles in late August or early September. The cut rice was allowed to dry for a day or so and then it was tied together in sheaves. These sheaves were carried to the mill or barnyard by flats which floated on the main canals or overland by ox-carts (Spalding 1835). The rice was stacked in the barn until threshing season (Gray 1941:729).

Preparing the rice for the market involved several processes: "threshing," the removal of the rice from the plant; cleaning or "winnowing," the separation of the grain from the chaff; "pounding,"

or "grinding," the removal of the outer hull and blowing it away from the shelled rice; finally, "polishing," which resulted in the clean white rice grains plus powdered fragments, known as rice flour (House 1954b: 59-60).

Threshing was done by hand using flails for most of the plantation period. Sometimes a floor was constructed for threshing; an "efficient" floor was 110 feet long and 50 feet wide and composed of three ranges of boards" (House 1954b:60). Rice was cleaned using wind or a fan. More often a winnowing house was constructed for this purpose. Winnowing houses were small, usually square-shaped buildings raised upon stilts. The rice was dropped through a hole in the floor of the house, and the wind blew away the chaff. The grain landed below the hole on a clay or earthen floor. It was swept up and placed in containers (Smith 1936:20, and illustrated). Not until the mid-nineteenth century was a reliable threshing mill developed which threshed and cleaned the rice (Gray 1941:729-730).

In colonial days, the outer husks of the rice grain were removed by hand-powered mills and hand fans blew away the chaff. These "husking" machines consisted of slabs of wood about 2 feet in diameter revolving one on the other. The inner shell was removed by hand by use of a mortar and pestle (Smith 1936:21; Gray 1941:287). Later in the nineteenth century, mills were developed which combined all of the processes of milling rice—grinding, cleaning, pounding, screening, and polishing (Gray 1941:730; Lawson 1975:11, illustration of the devices used in a rice pounding mill). Power for these mills was supplied by tides, steam engines, animal power, or wind. The steam-powered mills were the

most efficient (House 1954b:62-65). Plantations with threshing machines often housed machinery for threshing, pounding, and polishing within the same structure (Smith 1936:22; House 1954b:62). Only very large plantations, however, could afford to be fully equipped with milling facilities. The planter with pounding and polishing mill could ship pounded, clean grain to the market, whereas the planter without had to ship rough rice, or "paddy." Also, the planter without a mill had to rely upon toll mills to complete the processing of the rice for a percentage of the grain. Several European buyers, however, preferred to purchase rough rice and mill it in their own countries. Because of this there was always a substantial market for rough rice. By 1850, most foreign shipment was paddy, and pounding mills were utilized primarily for the domestic market (Gray 1941:730; House 1954b:68).

World prices for rice were based upon polished rice and weight (House 1954b:67). The commercial standard weight of rough rice was 44 to 45 pounds a bushel (Austin 1893:24; Doar 1970:18), and the average yield of rice lands varied from 25 to 60 bushels of rough rice per acre (Gray 1941:730). Polished rice was packed in "tierces," each weighing 600 pounds. The quality or grade of the rice was judged according to the number of bushels it took to make one tierce. Generally, 20 bushels or less of rough rice to make one tierce of polished rice was considered a good crop, more than 20 an inferior one (Doar 1970:18). Prices varied considerably during the antebellum period. The best prices for Georgian rice, however, were obtained between 1840 and 1860, or the "golden age" of Georgian rice production. At that time

rice sold for \$.80 to \$2.23 per bushel or 2 to 4.75 cents per pound (House 1954b:78).

Rice, like all other plantation crops, was marketed through factors in major port cities. The factor served as the "middleman" between the planters and the rice merchants. He was the banker and stockbroker for the planter and provided him with credit in meeting operational costs. Since the planter depended upon the returns from his crop for cash, he was often in debt to the factor when rice sales were low (Easterby 1941). Prior to 1840, most Georgian rice was sold through factors based in Charleston. After that date, Georgian planters increasingly sold their rice from Savannah. By 1859, Savannah had 82 factor establishments. Savannah experienced a rapid growth as a rice port. Its population increased; a thriving trade developed with ports in the West Indies, Mobile, and New Orleans; and it became an important social and cultural center (House 1954b:70-79).

The rice industry on the Carolina-Georgia costs was seriously beginning to decline on the eve of the Civil War, although large-scale rice production did not vanish completely from the area until the end of the nineteenth century. Competition from rice-growing states in the southwest and the rising cost and scarcity of slaves (Cole 1927:600-601) were the major causes for this new crisis facing the rice planter. Nonetheless, the industry managed to survive because of large crop yields. After the Civil War, however, attempts to restore the former prosperity to the industry were futile. The new labor system and increased flooding from freshets caused by accelerated erosion in the interior (Trimble 1969) made rice cultivation unprofitable. Gradually,

the interest in rice was abandoned. Finally, a major storm destroyed the last remaining vestiges of rice culture at the turn of the century (Vanstory 1970:83). The following passage taken from an article in the Darien Timber Gazette summarizes the sentiment toward rice growing among post-bellum planters in Georgia after a devastating flood:

the loss will be a heavy blow to many of the planters especially where money was borrowed to plant with. Several have already declared they will not plant any more as the crop is so uncertain. Every year the acreage is decreasing and the upriver planters are nearly discouraged.  
(27 August 1887, Darien, Georgia)

#### Long-Staple Cotton Culture

Like rice, the production of long-staple cotton was restricted to the coastal fringes for most of the antebellum period. It became known as "sea-island cotton" because the staple was believed to degenerate when removed from the influence of saltwater (Allston 1854:593). Its introduction to the coastal states, unlike that of rice, occurred in Georgia not South Carolina. Initially grown in the Caribbean, long-staple cotton made its way to coastal Georgia through expatriated Georgians who had made their home in the Bahamas after the Revolutionary War. The success of the cotton in the Bahamas led the former Georgians to send a few bags of the seed to their friends and relatives in Georgia (Coulter 1941:65-68; Hammond 1897:16-17). Gradually, the fruit yielded a finer and better cotton than that grown in the Bahamas (Johnson 1930:24-25). By 1789, substantial quantities were produced in Georgia and its cultivation spread to nearby South Carolina.

For most of the antebellum period, sea-island cotton was grown exclusively along the narrow strip from Charleston, South Carolina, to



the St. Johns River in Florida (Hammond 1897:19). In the early forties, it was discovered that the crop was adaptable to sea marshes if these were reclaimed and to interior lands as much as 100 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. This discovery led to the expansion of the industry into the interior lands of Georgia and Florida. By 1858, Florida had become a leader in the production of sea-island cotton, and the volume of exports for the staple increased by 50 percent as a result of the expansion in cultivation (Gray 1941:733-734).

Long-staple cotton was strikingly distinctive from the short-staple which was cultivated elsewhere in the Old South. As the name implies, the fiber was longer than the short-staple. The fiber length of sea-island cotton ranged from 1 1/2 to 2 inches as contrasted with 5/8 to 1 inch for the short-staple (Gray 1941:731). The quality of the two was also dissimilar. The fine, silky long-staple was used in the manufacture of lace, thread, and cloth of silky luster. On the other hand, short-staple cotton was used primarily for making coarse cotton cloth (Gray 1941:731; Phillips 1929:91). Moreover, the long-staple required a longer growing season, more hands per acre, and more tedious methods for cultivation, harvesting, and processing (see Otto 1975:63-61 for a detailed comparison of the two varieties of cotton).

#### Methods of Planting and Cultivation

The soil was prepared for planting in February or early March. Soils varied from light sandy loams to heavy clays, but the sandy ones were preferred (Phillips 1969:271). On lowlands "ditching" similar to that employed in rice culture was often necessary to drain an area before

planting (Gray 1941:731). High ridges 4 1/2 to 5 feet apart were constructed before the seed was planted. These were usually made with hoes, particularly in the old "sea-island region" (Gray 1941:735). Plows came into wider use during the late antebellum period, when more time was needed to manure exhausted soils (Gray 1941:734). Between late March and the middle of April, the seed was sown. Once the cotton plant sprouted, it had to be "thinned" with hoes several times. Generally cultivation consisted of 4 to 8 hoeings, and grass was pulled by hand.

With a few notable exceptions, most sea-island cotton planters did little to enhance the productivity of their crop prior to 1830. At that time, confronted with fluctuating prices and soil exhaustion, experiments with manuring and crop rotation were undertaken (Johnson 1930:51-54). Manuring soon came into wide use, and various types of manures were utilized such as marsh mud, crushed shell, and guano. The practice of crop rotation, on the other hand, was limited to a few enterprising planters (Johnson 1930:60-64). Careful selection of seeds was perhaps the universal practice adopted by most planters to improve the quality of the cotton. Several varieties were known and some reputed to yield cotton that sold between \$1.50 to \$2.00 a pound. Unfortunately, the production of these seeds was kept secret and this knowledge is now lost to agriculture (DeBows Review 1867:87).

#### Harvesting, Processing, and Marketing

A great deal of care had to be taken while harvesting the cotton. The fiber was gathered as soon as the pod opened in order to protect it from injury. Also, trash, leaves, and dirt had to be separated from the

fiber carefully. Harvesting required 10 to 12 pickings, whereas the short-staple only required three (Gray 1941:735). After it was picked, the cotton was placed on a platform to dry in the sun and later stored in the barn to await ginning.

The famous "Whitney saw gin," invented for the removal of seed from short-staple cotton, was not used for ginning sea-island cotton; instead, "roller gins" were used. In the early days these were hand-powered mills derived from the Indian churka. Later improvements to this apparatus led to the invention of gins powered by animals or steam (Hammond 1897:72). After the cotton was ginned, it was "moted"; that is the residue from the broken seeds was removed. The clean cotton was then hand-packed in bales, since hand-packed bales were less injurious to cotton and consequently brought higher prices than those packed by a press (Gray 1941:736).

Both acreage per hand and yields per acre were severely limited because of the laborious cultivation and processing methods. Where cultivation relied exclusively upon hand labor, the average number of acres cultivated per laborer was 3 to 4. Where the plow was substituted for the hoe, the average number of acres per laborer was 6 to 7. The average yield per acre ranged from 125 to 400 pounds, although yields recorded as high as 2,000 pounds per acre were known (Gray 1941:737; Phillips 1969: 275).

Only superior long-staple cotton commanded very high prices, but its production was limited to a small group of planters (Allston 1854: 596). For the rest of staple, price fluctuations were considerable. The average price range during periods of good to high prices was \$.40 to \$.80 a pound, and at periods of depressed prices \$.14 to \$.25 a

pound. The decade before the Civil War was a period of rising prices after a long period of depressed prices. At that time, the average price of cotton was between \$.37 and \$.47. However, after the Civil War, the quality of the crop deteriorated and its production became less valuable. Machinery was soon developed which produced thread from the short-staple as delicate as that made from the long-staple (DeBows Review 1867:88). Finally, devastation from the boll weevil made the production of the crop totally unprofitable (Brown and Ware 1958:69).

### Summary

Rice and long-staple cotton are two very dissimilar cultigens. Each crop requires distinctive modes of cultivation and processing. For the most part, each is cultivated in a very specialized habitat and is produced for its own peculiar market. Yet analogies between the two crops exist in the history of their production in the Georgia tidewater.

Both crops were restricted to a synonymous geographic range and required a considerable labor force. These similarities were particularly significant to the demography and economy of coastal Georgia. The Georgia tidewater, like that of South Carolina, became a region with a heavy concentration of slaves and a few wealthy slaveholders where absenteeism frequently prevailed.

Another analogy was evident in general cultivation practices. Often, sea-island cotton growers were also rice growers or former rice growers. Apparently, certain practices established for rice, the older staple, were frequently adopted for cotton. Some of these, though harmless to the rice, proved to be detrimental to the cotton industry.

Clearly, the conservatism toward the use of hand labor, manures, and crop rotation had its origins in rice culture. Manuring was not essential to rice growing since silt loam from irrigation aided soil fertility (Cole 1927:601). Similarly, hand labor was vital to rice culture because of the difficulties of plowing. Perhaps an early implementation of plowing and manuring in the cultivation of long-staple cotton would have resulted in lower production costs and higher yields than those actually experienced by most coastal planters. At least, the success of the sea-island cotton industry in Florida was partially related to the greater use of the plow (Gray 1941:737). Unfortunately, the failure to employ crop rotation methods by both cultures resulted in early soil exhaustion, which had disastrous effects upon post-bellum agriculture in the area.

Likewise, labor practices were very similar. Here again, the task system which developed from rice culture was later used for cotton culture. Under the task system, field hands were classified as full, three-quarter, half, and one-quarter hands (Flanders 1933:143-144). Generally, each full laborer was expected to work a task of  $1/4$  to  $1/2$  acre everyday, whether in rice fields or cotton fields. This system was particularly advantageous if the worker completed the task by mid-afternoon. Upon completion of the task, he or she had the remainder of the day to tend to personal needs. Conversely, under the gang system, the other major labor system for plantation slavery, workers labored in the fields from sunrise to sunset (Phillips 1929:279-280; Stamp 1956: 53-56).

It has been suggested that the task system provided slaves at sea-island cotton plantations in coastal Georgia with sufficient leisure time to improve their material lots (Otto 1975; MacFarlane 1975). Under the task system, the quality of slave life could be greatly improved through hunting and fishing, selling handicrafts or plantation produce, or by growing foods to supplement plantation rations. Presumably, the use of the task system at a rice plantation should have resulted in the same conditions. But how similar were the conditions of slavery in two very different crop loci? The adaptations of slavery to long-staple cotton culture in coastal Georgia has been investigated utilizing both documentary and archaeological resources (Otto 1975; MacFarlane 1975). A similar investigation of slave adaptations to rice culture along the coast of Georgia is presented in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER 3  
HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS  
AT BUTLER ISLAND

Butler Island is one of several "brackish marsh islands" (Long 1958:11) within the Altamaha drainage in McIntosh County, Georgia (see Figure 4). These islands are termed brackish because they become covered with saltwater when tides are pushed by high wind and are inundated with freshwater when rivers overflow as in the case of freshets (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture 1961: 21). The land consists of sediments washed down from streams flowing out of the piedmont and the coastal plain. Soils vary but are primarily clayey. Generally, these marsh soils are poorly drained and can be extremely acidic, particularly on unreclaimed marsh (Long 1958:13).

During the nineteenth century, most of these islands were converted for rice culture. Later in the twentieth century, truck farming replaced rice culture. Most recently, these marshlands have become managed breeding grounds and refuge for waterfowl. Since 1954, several of these islands have been acquired by the Game and Fish Commission of the Georgia Department on Natural Resources for the development of a waterfowl management area. Butler Island and adjacent Champney Island were the first to be acquired for the program (Anonymous nd). Today, Butler Island has become the headquarters for the Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area.

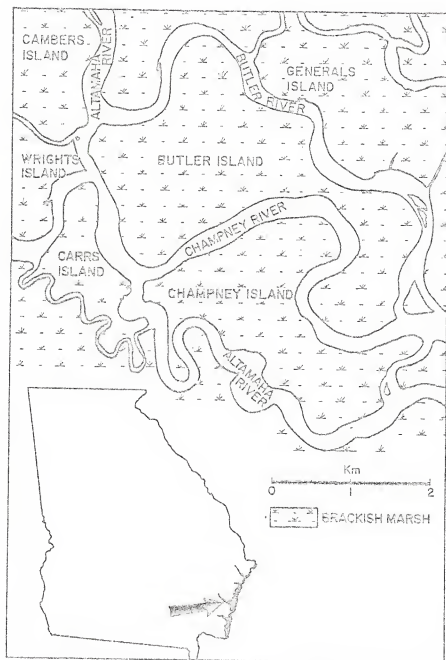


Figure 4. Butler Island and Environs.



Archaeological investigations were undertaken at Butler Island in response to a need to locate and identify archaeologically sensitive areas within the confines of waterfowl management activity. Certain management practices such as seasonal flooding, plowing, and dredging activities would adversely affect or destroy archaeological sites. In past years on several occasions, archaeological materials have been unearthed as a consequence of these practices. To prevent these practices, funds were obtained for survey, inventory, and testing at Butler Island from the grant-in-aid program of Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS), U.S. Department of the Interior, and administered by the Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Nine sites were located and identified. All were found to be historic sites, but three have prehistoric components.

In this study the slave village sites are the subject of discussion, although the other plantation period sites are briefly described. A detailed description of all the sites will be part of another archaeological report (Singleton nd).

Another major aspect of the Butler Island project has been the archival research. Documents relating to the Butler family ownership of Butler Island are voluminous. These records have not only provided the background data presented in this chapter, but have also been utilized in the identification, dating, and interpretation of the archaeological resources.

#### Ownership and Occupation

Unfortunately, the first colonial grantees of Butler Island could not be ascertained. It is possible that the Lochlan McIntosh

family acquired Butler Island during the colonial period. Between the years 1753 and 1775, Lochlan McIntosh purchased several large tracts of marshland in the Altamaha delta (Jackson 1973:17-18). The precise identification for some of these islands is unclear; Butler Island may have been one of them.

Although the first owners of Butler Island are unknown, Major Pierce Butler apparently made the first attempts toward reclamation and cultivation of the island. While the family's ownership was complex,\* an attempt has been made to summarize it (see Table 1). The island was in the possession of the Butlers for close to 120 years, and several family members have made this island a very significant historic site.

Born in Ireland, Major Butler came to America in 1766 as an officer in the British Army. He liked America and decided to settle here. Later in 1771, he married Polly Middleton, the daughter of a wealthy South Carolina planter. He and Polly had one son and four daughters. During the American Revolution, Major Butler sided with the revolutionaries and became an important political figure in South Carolina. In 1787, he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, and he was elected twice as a senator from South Carolina to the U.S. Senate (Scott 1973:53, 1978:6-7).

At the Constitutional Convention, Major Butler was one of the principal proponents arguing that state representation in the House of Representatives should be proportional to the total population, both slave and free (Alden 1971:86-87; Scott 1973:6). Butler and his

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\*See Scott (1961:xx-xxi) for a genealogy of the Butler family.

Table 1  
Ownership of Butler Island, 1790? to the Present

Time	Owners
1790?-1822	Major Pierce Butler
1822-1836	John Butler and Pierce Butler, Jr. (formerly John Mease and Butler Mease), but estate was administered by the Major's daughter Frances and his son Thomas.
1836-1847	John and Pierce, Jr., assumed full responsibilities of ownership until John's death in 1847.
1847-1861	Properties jointly owned by Pierce, Jr., and John Butler heirs, but slaves had been divided equally between the two.
1861-1865 (Civil War)	Abandoned.
1866-1878	Frances Butler Leigh (Pierce Butler, Jr., and Fanny Kemble's daughter).
1878-1910	Leighs still own but have leased the island to rice planters.
1910-1920	Passes through several hands, primarily rice growers.
1920-1949	Colonel Huston.
1949-1954	R. J. Reynolds.
1954-present	Game and Fish Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

supporters believed that the slave states needed this type of representation in order to prevent the possibility that a majority of representatives from the free states would attempt to abolish slavery. The Major's view epitomized that of the small but powerful elite who desired to perpetuate and expand the institution of slavery (Scott 1978:7).

In 1790, Polly died and the Major took his family and slaves to Georgia. Like many South Carolinians, the Major moved southward in search of new lands. The developing market for sea-island cotton and the revival of the rice industry made the fresh, fertile lands of Georgia attractive to the immigrants.

By 1799, Major Butler had acquired several thousand acres in McIntosh and Glynn counties. Included in these were Butler Island, Butler Point on St. Simons Island,\* Little St. Simons Island, and pine land on the mainland known as Woodville (Butler Estate Papers, 1799)(see Figure 5 for locations). In addition to land, the major also acquired such a vast number of slaves that by the time of his death he owned close to 700 (Butler Estate Papers, 1821). Eventually, the Major became one of the wealthiest planters in Georgia.

The Major built a fine mansion at Hampton plantation on St. Simons Island, where he spent most winters. It was here that Aaron Burr sought refuge after the duel in which he killed Alexander Hamilton. Burr visited the plantation for a month and he described it in many of his letters to his daughter, Theodosia (Van Doren 1929). The Major

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\*Concurrent with the archaeological research at Butler Island, similar research has been undertaken at several sites of the Hampton plantation (see Mullins, 1978; Fairbanks and Mullins-Moore, 1980; and Mullins-Moore, nd).

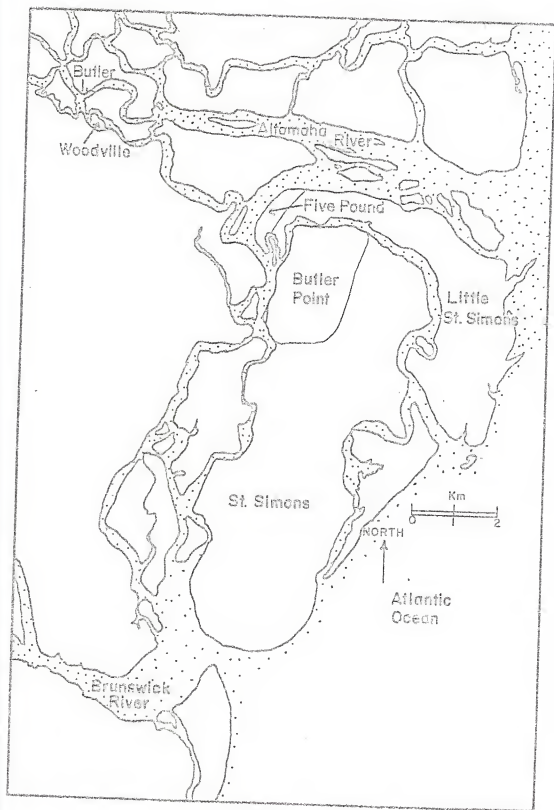


Figure 5. The Butler Georgian Estate. (Adapted from Scott 1961.)

and his daughters, however, made Philadelphia their permanent home. Thus, the responsibility of running the estate during the Major's absence was taken care of by an overseer.

When the Major died in 1822, his properties were inherited by his grandsons, John and Butler Mease. The Major had wanted his only son, Thomas, to take on the responsibility of administering the Georgian estate after his death, but Thomas, who hated the Major, refused and went to Europe to live (Scott 1973:54). Thus, the Major disinherited his son and made his grandsons heirs. After the Major's death, however, Thomas helped his sister Frances to administer the estate until the Mease boys came of age and were able to do so. At the Major's request, his grandsons had to change their surnames to Butler. Consequently, John Mease became John Butler and Butler Mease became Pierce Butler, Jr. In 1834, Pierce Butler, Jr., married Fanny Kemble, the famous British actress. During her first and only trip to her husband's Georgian estate in 1839, she wrote the controversial account of slave life, A Journal of A Residence on A Georgian Plantation In 1838-1839, which was published more than 20 years later.

Fanny and Pierce came to Georgia with their two young daughters for approximately four months. Two months were spent at Butler Island and another two at Hampton Plantation. Fanny was outraged at the conditions under which the slaves lived, particularly the suffering endured by women. Fanny's reaction resulted in many heated arguments with Pierce, which intensified the couple's preexisting marital problems. After their return to Philadelphia, the marriage grew increasingly worse. In 1849, Fanny returned to Britain, the couple were divorced, and Pierce gained custody of their daughters (Scott 1973:11).

Fanny always wanted to publish the journal she had kept while in Georgia. In 1859, she began giving this serious thought for two reasons: first, she was no longer married to Butler; second, the estate she describes in the journal no longer existed (Scott 1973:119). Pierce Butler had fallen into serious financial debt as a result of the crash in 1857, and more than 400 slaves were sold to pay his debts (Thomsen 1863). In light of these new circumstances, Fanny reasoned that her journal would be thought of less in a personal way than as a social statement of slavery in the United States (Scott 1973:120). The Emancipation Proclamation and the events of the Civil War gave her the final impetus toward publication. Fanny felt that the journal would help "explain Lincoln's war aims and show the nature of the system that the North was fighting to abolish" (Scott 1973:122). The journal was published May 1863 (Kemble 1882:205).

It is difficult to estimate the reaction to the journal immediately after its publication. A few Southerners have suggested that the journal single-handedly swayed British opinion against the South, which made aid to the Confederate War effort impossible (e.g. Perkerson 1952:133-134). Even among Fanny's admirers this opinion has prevailed (Armstrong 1938:432). It has also been argued, however, that the journal had little influence upon the contemporary public (Lombard 1930). Recent evidence has indicated that by the time the journal was published, British opinion had already turned against the South (Scott 1973:124). More significant than the criticism related to the influence of the journal upon the contemporary public is the criticism related to its accuracy and authenticity. Among historians

viewpoints vary. Apologists for slavery tend to be very critical (e.g. Phillips 1929:259-265; Eaton 1949). Other historians have found a great deal of accuracy in Fanny's descriptions of slave life, although some suggest that the journal is overromanticized (e.g. Stamp 1950; Genovese 1974; Owens 1975). Of all the critics, Georgians have been the most hostile (Holmes 1978; Lovell 1932:196, 213; Cate 1960). Even today, this sentiment persists (Fancher 1971:102; e.g. Lewis and Huie 1978:120).

Butler Island was deserted during the Civil War, with the exception of a few slaves who remained. In 1866, Pierce Butler, Jr., and his daughter, Frances, returned to Butler Island to restore rice planting (Vanstory 1970:87). Frances kept a journal, which was later published (Leigh 1883). Her journal became one of the few documents that describe labor conditions in the South during the postwar years (House 1942b:157). Pierce Butler died in 1867. Frances, accompanied by her German maid, managed the plantations alone for four years. Frances married Reverend James Leigh in 1871 while she was in England and they remained there until 1873, at which time they returned to Georgia. The Reverend Leigh was very much interested in the South and helped to establish St. Cyprian Church for the blacks of Darien. Leigh wrote of his experiences in coastal Georgia in Other Days (1921).

While in England, the Leighs contracted some English workers to supplement the black labor at Butler Island. These British laborers resided at Butler Island and occupied the former slave hospital. As laborers, however, they were a disappointment (Leigh 1883:202-213). Discouraged, in 1876, the Leighs decided to return to England and placed the management of the islands in the hands of a manager. In 1878 they gave up their planting interest entirely.



Information of ownership and land use at Butler Island in the years between the Leighs' departure and 1920 has been very sketchy. It has been assumed that the island was abandoned and left unattended (Vanstory 1970:89). Yet deed records, local informants, newspapers, and a valuable map (see Figure 6) have suggested a different interpretation.

Evidently, the Leighs leased and sold portions of their properties in the Altamaha delta between 1878 and 1910. By 1910, all of their properties were sold (McIntosh County Records, Deed Books H-52, I-120, I-160). These properties, which embraced all of Butler Island and General's Island, were sold and leased to rice planters, who in turn contracted with tenants to farm small plots for a portion of the crop (as shown in Figure 6). Local informants have indicated that by the 1880s, tenants no longer lived at Butler Island. Instead, they lived at several settlements on the mainland and commuted daily by small boats to Butler and General's Islands. Two of these informants, both descendants of slaves in the area, remember vividly planting rice at Butler Island in the early 1900s.\*

Long after the Leighs left Georgia they continued to correspond with the local blacks (Letters from Descendants of Butler Slaves, 1890-1903). Particularly, their only child, Alice Leigh, visited Georgia often and on these visits she would give parties for the people (Cate and Wrightman 1955:203). As children, present-day black residents of Darien performed for "Lady Alice" on these occasions.\*\* The impact of

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\*Elizabeth Bates and Jim Cook, Personal communication, 1978, Darien, Georgia.

\*\*Nan-Earl Wylly and Mrs. Gamble, personal communication, 1978, Darien, Georgia.

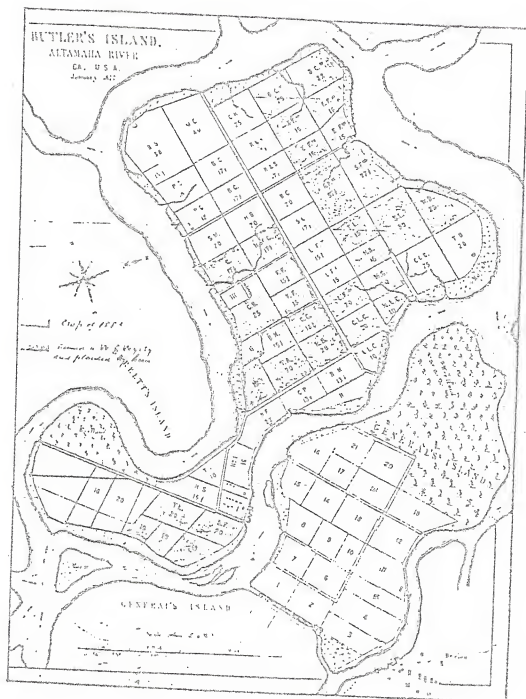


Figure 6. The Subdivision of Butler and General's Islands into Tenant Plots (circa 1883).

the Butler family upon the Afro-Americans in the area had lasted well over a century.

In 1920, Colonel Tillinghast L'Houmedieu Huston, part owner of the New York Yankees, purchased Butler Island. He built a two-story house, which is still standing today on the presumed site of the overseer's cottage. Huston established a dairy farm and planted fruit trees and vegetables. His special interest, however, was the cultivation of iceberg lettuce. He revamped the old rice irrigation system and used it for his fields. Huston remained at Butler Island until his death. In 1949, Butler Island was sold to Richard J. Reynolds, the tobacco millionaire, who made additional improvements to lettuce cultivation (Vanstory 1970:90). In 1954, Reynolds donated Butler Island to the state of Georgia for the development of a wildlife preserve.

Plantation Management at Butler Island,  
1802-1860

The overseer on the Carolina-Georgia coast has been described as the most important "single element in the management hierarchy of the rice belt" (Scarborough 1964:18). At least, this appears to have been the case at Butler Island, where the Roswell King family successfully managed the estate for over thirty years during the Butler family's periodic absences.

Absenteeism as a practice among rice planters was established fairly early by colonial predecessors. This tradition developed, in part, out of a need to escape the hot, malarial season as it was generally believed that "miasmas" caused the disease. The ownership of multiple plantations also necessitated the periodic absence from one or

more of these productive units (Bridenbaugh 1952:69). In the early days, planters traveled to the North or to Europe, while others migrated to their town houses in Charleston and other coastal cities. Seashore settlements and pineland, piedmont, and mountain villages began to supplement the coastal towns as summer resorts later in the nineteenth century (Brewster 1970:109). The degree of absenteeism, however, apparently varied along the rice coast. For example, in the Georgetown district in South Carolina, one planter noted that of 111 rice plantations in the area only 51 of the owners actually lived on their plantations, and of that number all were absent during the crop season from May to November (Allston quoted in Cathey 1956:142). Some planters, who could not afford a "dual existence" or who were too far from Charleston or Savannah, remained on their estates throughout the year or most of the year (Bridenbaugh 1952:70). In the Altamaha Basin, rice planters spent a major portion of the year on their rice estates and moved to nearby pineland retreats or barrier island plantations for the summer months. Often, they commuted each day to keep a watchful eye on the progress of the crop and other management problems (House 1954b:19). The Butlers were the only exception to this rule (see Wylly 1910:48-53). They were never full-time residents of Georgia. Because they were generally absent from their Georgian estate, the overseers regularly corresponded with them. Fortunately, a large portion of this correspondence has survived to the present day.\*

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\*The Roswell Kings' Correspondence is found under two manuscript collections of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, in Philadelphia: The Butler Family Papers (primarily Boxes 9, 10, 11, 12), and the Wister Family Papers (The Butler Family Section, Boxes 31, 33, 34).

This correspondence provides a wealth of information related to the day-to-day activities at Butler Island and the other Georgian properties. In many ways these letters resemble similar correspondence written by overseers at other plantations with absentee landlords (e.g. Easterby, 1945; Bassett 1968; Clifton 1978). All have in common a concern with planting, harvesting, and marketing activities; labor management problems; and the health and welfare of the slaves. Occasionally, the Roswell Kings' letters also supply some indices of slave behavior. Most often, however, only deviant behavior was reported, and therefore these references tend to be biased and one-sided. Yet, despite this limitation, the Kings' observations provide valuable insights into slave lifeways at Butler Island.

As overseers, Roswell King, Sr., and later his son, also named Roswell, belonged to the "overseer elite" (Scarborough 1966:158-177). This minority among overseers was frequently employed on the Carolina-Georgia rice coast but was found in other localities as well (e.g. Sitterson 1943). For the most part, members of the overseer elite were conscientious and efficient men. They made significant contributions to agriculture, and some became planters themselves. Often, they were the sons of planters. In contrast with their colleagues, they were usually well paid. Both the Kings earned as much as \$2,000 a year.

Roswell King, Sr., had come to the Georgia coast from Sharon, Connecticut, in the 1780s (Lewis 1975:39). In 1802, he became the manager of the Butler estate, a position he retained until 1819. Sometime after that date, he became the manager of the Darien Saw Mill (Darien Gazette, 6 January 1821). King's son, Roswell, Jr., was

selected to replace him upon recommendations from Roswell, Sr., and John Couper of Cannon's Point on St. Simons Island (Couper to Major Butler, 15 February 1818). Roswell, Jr., presided as overseer until 1839. It was young King's resignation which resulted in the trip Pierce Butler, Jr., and his wife, Fanny Kemble, made to Georgia. Butler had come to Georgia to hire a replacement for Roswell, Jr. Thomas Olden, formerly the manager at James Hamilton Couper's Hopeton plantation (Anonymous 1965?), was hired to managed the estate. Olden died in 1841, and Roswell, Jr., once again became involved with the management of the Butler estate, but this time in the capacity of a steward. As a steward, he supervised two overseers and managed the account books. Roswell, Jr., held this post until the mid-1850s (Scarborough 1966:168).

Unfortunately, most of the plantation records for the Butler estate, particularly the overseers' records, are between the years 1803 and 1835, prior to Fanny Kemble's visit. Within these 32 years, however, it is possible to obtain a very clear picture of planting and labor management activities. After 1835, it becomes difficult to document management practices, but it may be reasonable to assume that earlier, established practices prevailed in later years.

Under the management of the Kings, the Butler estate was operated efficiently. Both Kings had taken an active interest in planting. With regard to labor management, runaways were few, and slaves received treatment comparable to other slaves in the area. To a great extent, their success as managers may have been related to the dutiful drivers of the estate. Most of the drivers were loyal and reliable, and the Kings felt a high regard for them. For example, in the selection of a new driver

for Butler Island, King sought the counsel of two drivers at Hampton Plantation (Roswell King, Sr., 15 November 1818). Several years later, Roswell, Jr., praised the work of a driver by saying: "The hands appear to be fit enough to attack another crop, which can only be attributed to Sambo's management in varying the work as much as possible" (Roswell King, Jr., 24 September 1826). The death of a good driver was considered a great loss to the estate, as well as to the entire planter community: "Driver Bram . . . was worth a great deal to the estate . . . his death is regretted by every white person who know him" (Roswell King, Jr., 1 February 1825). But problems with drivers were not uncommon. One at Butler Island was involved in stealing large amounts of corn from the warehouses and selling the corn to merchants in Darien (Roswell King, Sr., 22 November 1806). Another driver, also at Butler Island, apparently was an alcoholic (Roswell King, Jr., 29 August 1806). Occasionally, a driver's cruelty to the field hands required that he be removed:

I have been obliged to displace Morris at St. Anne. He was always tyrannical and brutal, which I generally kept under, but lately he had become intemperate, in fits of that kind, and has used great severity to some of the negroes. (Roswell King, Jr., 16 July 1826)

Despite occasional problems, most drivers were good at their jobs and to the field hands (see Van Deburg 1979, for a reassessment of the slave driver). Generally, drivers "stroved to mediate between the Big House and the quarters" (Genovese 1974:378). At Butler Island, drivers were particularly vital to the management of a plantation which saw few whites.

Of all the properties in the estate, Butler Island was the largest in both acreage and in production. More slaves were utilized in the plantation operation than at any of the other properties. As many as 300 to 400 slaves lived and worked at this rice island and they occupied four slave settlements or villages. Rice production, however, was not the major interest of the estate until the 1820s. Prior to that time, long-staple cotton dominated the planting interest (Scott 1961:xxxviii-xxxix). Most of the cotton was planted at St. Simons and Little St. Simons, but some was also cultivated at Butler Island, apparently for crop rotation purposes (see Coulter 1941:104). Despite the interest in cotton, considerable quantities of rice were produced before 1820. As indicated in Table 2, the average annual production of rice was 712 tierces between the years 1802 and 1820. From 1821 to 1833, the average annual production (1827 and 1829 are not included) was 1,246 tierces. Thus, in later years, rice production increased by approximately 43 percent. Years of low production coincided with losses due to storms, as well as to years when the acreage planted in cotton may have exceeded that of rice.

The rice cultivation methods utilized at Butler Island were generally typical of the region. As a rule, the most sophisticated methods and equipment were employed. As early as 1802, rice fields were manured, possibly with lime and marl (Barker, 1841-1844) to enhance soil productivity (Roswell King, Sr., 17 September 1803). Fields were planted with rice one year and then rotated with cotton to keep down the growth of grasses (Coulter 1941:104). Occasionally, the fields were prepared with plows, but hand labor predominated. In the processing



Table 2  
Rice Production at Butler Island, 1802-1833

Year	Acreage	Number of Tierces <sup>a</sup>
1802	--	128
1803	--	337 1/2
1804	--	44 <sup>b</sup>
1805	--	1326
1806	--	468 1/2
1807	--	1186
1808	--	565 1/2
1809	--	678 1/2
1810	--	587 1/2
1811	--	857
1812	--	1739
1813	--	253 1/2 <sup>b</sup>
1814	--	829
1815	--	591
1816	--	513
1817	--	1058
1818	--	650
1819	407	1173
1820	227	548 1/2
1821	234	832
1822	272	1080
1823	358	1240
1824	342	84 <sup>b</sup>
1825	318	1024
1826	399	1455
1827	--	--
1828	395	1331
1829	--	--
1830	505	1747
1831	552	1557
1832	271	1695
1833	591	1660

Source: Compiled from Annual Crop and Livestock Reports, 1803-1833.

Note: Average annual tierces, 1802-1830, is 712; average annual tierces, 1821-1833 is 1,246; increase equals 43%.

<sup>a</sup> Tierce = 600 lbs.

<sup>b</sup> Low production due to hurricanes.

of rice, experiments were attempted with every conceivable threshing and pounding device. By 1835, the machinery for processing rice included an animal-powered mill, two tidal mills, and a steam mill. The steam mill was built in 1833; it housed both threshing and pounding machinery and its cost was over \$20,000 (Roswell King, Jr., 25 March 1832, 22 April 1832, 22 February 1833). Evidently, the threshing mills were not sufficient for the amount of rice harvested, and a portion of it was threshed by hand on "tarred" threshing floors (Roswell King, Sr., 9 August 1806; Kemble 1961 (1863):109-110). Rough rice was also marketed, but large quantities were not sold until the 1850s (Pierce Butler, Jr., Ledger, 1851-1855).

Besides rice and cotton, sugar was planted at Butler Island beginning in 1812. In fact, Major Butler had considered "turning the island into a sugar plantation" (Roswell King, Sr., 1 November 1812). Between the years 1812 and 1815, complete sugar processing equipment was added to the plantation complex (Butler Estate Papers, 1815a). Roswell, Sr., had become very interested in sugar culture and he sought the advice of West Indian planters (Roswell King, Sr., 12 August 1815). This interest in sugar was later pursued by Roswell, Jr. (King 1828). Regardless of their enthusiasm for sugar culture, the acreage allotted to it was always considerably smaller than that of rice or cotton.

Like most large plantations of the Old South (Gallman 1970:23), some provision foods were produced at Butler Island. Livestock were raised and some fruit trees and vegetables were cultivated. The list of stock included oxen, barrows, mules, mares, cattle, pigs, sheep, turkeys, and other fowl (Butler Estate Papers, 1803-1830). The draft

animals were used primarily for operating machinery and pulling carts and wagons. Wool was sheared from the sheep to make cloth (Roswell King, Sr., 18 August 1813). On special occasions, cattle, pigs, or sheep were butchered to feed the slaves (Roswell King, Sr., 16 May 1813; Roswell King, Jr., 13 November 1823). But these occasions were apparently rare, and slaves were most often fed "barrelled pork and salted fish" (Roswell King, Sr., 7 April 1816; Roswell King, Jr., 18 March 1821). Citrus fruit trees were planted along the outer bank of the island, an area approximately five miles in length. The purpose was to protect the dykes from storms or freshets (Spalding 1830). Several visitors to the area marveled at the beauty of the orange and lemon groves (Hall 1931 (1828):234; Coulter 1941:96). Most of the fruit was marketed and the remainder was sent to the Butlers or distributed among the plantation occupants (Roswell King, Jr., 25 December 1812, 8 November 1818). Although experiments with planting corn, barley, and potatoes were attempted (Roswell King, Sr., 31 May 1813, 1 June 1818), Butler Island lacked sufficient "high lands" or hammocks (see House 1939; 213, 1954a:153) for the production of provision crops. Consequently, most provision crops were either produced at the other plantations of the estate (Roswell King, Sr., 9 June 1814; Roswell King, Jr., 25 January 1819) or were purchased from other planters.

Plantation structures were numerous at Butler Island. In addition to the outbuildings needed to process and store rice, cotton, and sugar, a sawmill, cornmill, warehouses, and a slave hospital were among the structures (Butler Estate Papers, 1815a). The maintenance of these buildings was an ongoing process, and both slave mechanics and

hired white craftsmen were regularly engaged in making improvements on the structures.

Efforts were made toward making Butler Island self-sufficient in the production of plantation supplies. Construction materials were manufactured, including clay and tabby bricks, shingles, nails, and iron tools. Slave clothing and shoes were also frequently made. If trained slaves were unavailable, local whites were hired to undertake these tasks (Roswell King, Sr., 9 July 1805, 28 May 1815, 4 October 1815). Sometimes whites were employed to train the slaves in specific skills (Roswell King, Sr., 26 April 1816). The extent to which certain products were made depended on the needs of the plantation and the cost of manufacture at the time. This was clearly the case with regard to shoemaking: "As for tanning and shoemaking, I recommend you give it up. Hides have gotten extravagant. Our shoes cost \$4.00 a pair, you can get better shoes out of the state prison for \$1.00" (Roswell King, Sr., 15 November 1818). Thus "self-sufficiency" at the Butler estate varied through time and with the needs and interests of the owners.

Taken as a whole, the Butler estate was at most times very profitable. The estimated value of the slaves, structures, and lands was \$288,027 in 1818 (Roswell King, Sr., 19 July 1819). By the 1850s, the slaves alone were valued at \$300,000 (Pierce Butler, Jr., Ledger, 1851-1855). Annual returns on the crops ranged from \$20,000 to \$50,000 except in years of losses (Butler Estate Papers, 1814; Butler Estate Papers, 1824-1835). The estate, however, was not entirely a success story. Storms damaged tremendous amounts of crops in the years 1804, 1813, and 1824. The hurricane of 1804 was particularly disastrous

to coastal Georgia (Ludlum 1963:116), and the Butler estate lost not only crops but 19 slaves as well (Van Doren 1929:186). During the British raids along the coast in the War of 1812, 139 slaves were taken from the estate (Roswell King, Jr., 28 April 1815). In later years, freshets and epidemics among slaves had far-reaching effects upon profits. Finally, the crash of 1857 resulted in the sale of 500 slaves.

It is possible that Major Butler found the losses of his day overwhelming. Historic records indicate that he put the entire estate up for sale in 1818, a total of 15,000 acres and 535 Negroes (Darien Gazette, 1818-1819). The factors which motivated his actions are not clear. Perhaps he was of the opinion that the estate was becoming unprofitable. It is evident that Roswell, Sr., had begun urging the Major to sell portions of the estate in 1816: "I think you have too many eggs in one basket to keep . . . the land is worn out, the droughts and gales make our cotton the smallest I ever knew . . . Your interest is too large. . . . Not enough laborers for the amount of land" (Roswell King, Sr., 21 January 1816). In 1818, King's urging had become more persistent:

I have urged you to sell your estate for a long time out of the purest of motives, thinking Negroes was above their value and that was a time to sell, but I find I have erred in judgement, Negroes are rising in value like the tide, every day. . . . I recommend you to sell all your Negroes and land you hold in this state, say in a lump for \$555,000 and in my opinion in fifteen minutes after you read this and if you will not sell I strongly recommend to you without loss of your time make arrangements to lay out one hundred thousand in Negroes. Let them cost what they may—as I have often observed your estate must dwindle without more force. (Roswell King, Sr., 28 June 1818)

Whether it was King's persuasion or other factors which resulted in the decision to sell cannot be ascertained. The financial crashes between

1817 and 1819 may have been factors. During that time the entire southern economy suffered great financial losses (Eaton 1961:274-273). Personal family relations are another possibility. Unable to convince Thomas to take over the administration of his estate, the Major may have decided to sell before considering the alternative of leaving his properties to his grandsons. Whatever his reasons for selling, he never found a buyer: "I have done all I can to sell your estate to promote your interests and to close your accounts in Georgia. I fear I shall not be able to do much for you" (Roswell King, Sr., 16 January 1819). Thus the estate was retained and portions of it remained in the Butler family for another 90 years.

#### Records of Slave Life

One of the most astonishing aspects of the Butler estate was the size of the labor force. By 1859, a total of 919 slaves were included in the estate (Butler Estate Papers, 1859). Even in Major Butler's day, the total number of Butler slaves ranged from 500 to 700. Slaveholding of this magnitude was clearly in a class by itself. Slaveholders who owned from 500 to 1,000 slaves represented less than 2 percent of all slaveholding in the entire South. In Georgia, this "unusually large slaveholding was confined to less than 1 percent of all planters in the state" (Gray 1941:530-538). Thus, the size of the Butler estate made it atypical among southern plantations.

How the Major managed to acquire such a vast number of slaves is an interesting subject in itself. Most of the Major's initial transactions had taken place between the years 1786 and 1804 (George Hooper 1786-1802; Butler Estate Papers, 1801-1804). Although some of the

Butler slaves were direct imports from Africa (Roswell King, Sr., 13 May 1803), most were acquired through the domestic slave trade based in the older slaveholding regions, particularly the Virginia Tidewater. The enterprising Major, of course, found ways to add to his slaveholdings illegally. Before the Major left for Georgia, he took a considerable number of slaves belonging to his wife's family. Although the total number of slaves acquired illegally for the Major's in-laws is not certain, in 1817, 127 slaves were found to be the property of the Major's sister-in-law (Roswell King, Sr., 29 January 1817). Apparently, these slaves were never returned to their former owner. As planting interests expanded, the estate was supplemented with additional purchases of slaves. Natural increase also added to the slave population. Rarely did the death rate exceed the birth rate (see Table 3). The fact that few slaves were sold\* provided an additional factor which helped to maintain the size of the slave population.

Several slave lists exist for the Butler estate, but few specifically list the slaves at Butler Island. Tables 4 and 5 combine a number of lists taken from various time periods (Butler Estate Papers, 1803, 1821; Roswell King, Jr., Daybook, 1844). Indications are from the plantation records that this combined list reflects the average number of slaves regularly engaged in the labor force at Butler Island. The list, however, does not include children under age 10, which usually averaged 100 in number (Roswell King, Sr.,

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\*A close examination of the slave records reveals that the occasions on which slaves were sold from the estate were very rare. This is in keeping with the evidence concerning other rice plantations in the area (see House 1939:215).

Table 3  
Annual Births and Deaths of Butler Slaves

Year(s)	Births	Deaths
1802-1812	257	191
1819	29	19
1820	25	16
1821	19	27
1822	19	22
1823	32	14
1824	30	18
1825	20	28
1826	35	23
1827	41	39
1828	46	25
1829	31	16
1830	41	25
1831	45	20
1832	31	29
1833	43	34
1834	<u>53</u>	<u>34</u>
Total	756	580

Note: Natural increase = 176.



Table 4  
An Approximate List of Slaves by Age and Task Rate at Butler Island,  
1803-1845: Field Hands

Name	Age	Task Rate <sup>a</sup>
Sambo (driver)	33	--
Pender	31	1
Robin	25	1
Cloe	26	1
Eve	23	1
John	20	1
Lewis	18	1
Robin	25	1/4
Cornelia	30	1
Joe	43	1
Hannah	44	1
Limas	23	1
Amy	18	1
Charlotte	15	1
Molly	15	1/4
July	46	1
Nancy	26	1
Renter	56	1
Flora	53	1
Mary	32	1
Listern	29	1
Molly	25	1
Billy	49	1
Quacer	35	1
Mary	35	1
Toby	34	1
Adam	35	1
Minder	35	1
Total	--	25 1/2
Jack (driver)	57	--
London	28	1
Dido	21	1
John	29	1
Beck	16	1
Harry	29	1/4
Nancy	18	1
Jimmy	35	1/2
Toby	37	1
Nancy	52	1
Constant	16	1/4
Tinah	14	1/4

Table 4--(continued)

Name	Age	Task Rate <sup>a</sup>
Quash	36	1
Will	18	1/2
Flora	32	1
Auber	18	3/4
Jeffrey	37	1
Dally	45	1
Dago	26	1
Jean	34	1
Hagar	48	1
Sarah	18	1
Lisbon	24	1/2
Flu	25	1
Tamfsor	22	1
Maria	42	1
Total	--	22
Ley (driver)	30	--
Peggy	31	1
Sarah	19	1
Randall	46	3/4
Hector	24	1
Peggy	17	1/4
Sam	33	1
Libby	27	1
Provamy	23	1
Toby	19	1/2
Peter	16	1/4
Hagar	52	1/2
Leira	52	1/2
Leipta	26	1/2
Cosmba	42	1
Quamin	24	1
Hagar	17	3/4
Robin	16	1/4
Frank	29	1/4
May	22	1
Abram	42	1
Coomba	43	1
Billy	19	1
Lew	20	1/2
Lucy	29	3/4
Jimmy	47	1
Rose	20	1
		3/4

Table 4—(continued)

Name	Age	Task Rate <sup>a</sup>
Clarinda	--	
Violet	15	1/4
Fanny	20	1/4
Molly	17	1/2
Harry	37	1/2
Lilly	44	1
Charlotte	28	1
Temple	23	1
Total	--	25 1/2
Captain (driver)	52	
Dorcas	57	--
Lagette	25	1/2
Jenny	21	1
Cate	19	1
Dick	29	3/4
Charity	35	1
Morris	37	1
Melinda	43	1
Peter	40	1
London	1	1
York	16	1
Judy	25	1/2
Affa	29	1
Lilla	42	1
Mira	42	1
Violet	17	1/4
Pompe	12	1/4
Oncy	37	1/2
Joe	33	1
Juba	30	1
Betty	22	1
George	19	3/4
Lender	20	1
Pena	25	1
Philo	25	1
Elce	24	1
Silva	--	1/2
Total	--	22 3/4

Table 4—(continued)

Name	Age	Task Rate <sup>a</sup>
Frank (driver)	42	--
Elce	23	1
Albert	52	1
Lender	44	1
Brewster	33	1
Looney	35	1
Molly	13	1/4
Jerry	16	1/4
Bruths	36	1
Jenny	34	1
Kegew	39	1
Jack	21	1
Tom	37	1
Amy	29	1
Hagar	22	1
Tina	25	1
Mingo	17	1/4
Justice	32	3/4
John	33	1
Phoebe	32	1
Betty	35	1
Mary	41	3/4
Garrett	25	1
Ley	25	1
Rose	42	1
Patty	18	3/4
Esther	15	1/4
Cate	29	1
Cooper Nero	29	1
Mary	29	1
Total	--	26 3/4
Grand Total		122 1/2

Note. Total number = 156.

<sup>a</sup>1 = full time, 1/2 = half time, etc.

Table 5  
An Approximate List of Slaves, by Age and Occupation,  
at Butler Island, 1803-1845: Plantation Specialists

Occupation	Name	Age
Blacksmiths	Jack	70
	Sammy	50
	John	30
Sawyers	Andrew	30
	Sambo	55
Masons	Pompe	55
	Gorham	78
Carpenters	Jacob	--
	Sunday	56
	John	50
	Bram	5-
	Harry	3-
	Ned	3-
	Primis	--
	Frank	--
	Sambo	--
	George	--
	Abraham	37
	George	47
	Randy	30
	Alex	28
Shoemakers	Issac	18
	Robin	49
	Bram	48
Ditchers	Abraham	30
	Abraham Carter	30
	Justice	26
	Justice (younger)	21
	Sam	22
	Joe	25
	Robin	40
	Toby	22
	Quash	25
	Sancho	25
	Peter	29
	Tuco	20
Craftsmen		24
Ditchers		12

13 May 1827), or retired slaves involved in menial tasks. A census taken of the Butler slaves in 1830 indicates that 365 slaves lived at Butler Island at that time. The census provides the female-to-male ratio and age distributions, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6  
1830 Census of Slaves at Butler Island

Age	Male	Female	Total
Under 10	44	49	93
10-24	57	52	109
24-36	36	33	69
36-55	39	29	68
55-100	12	14	26
Total	188	177	365

Details obtained from plantation records regarding the material conditions of the Butler slaves are similar to standard slave care practices throughout the Old South. At Butler Island, these practices mirror those established for other rice plantations (e.g. Allston 1858; House 1954a; Phillips 1969; 114-130). Generally, these practices include the following: the provision of two sets of clothing annually, one for winter and the other for summer; plantation rations, which consisted primarily of corn, pork, salted fish, and molasses; a sick house and medical attention furnished by the overseer or slave doctor; and housing. Superficially, the records tend to suggest that the Butler slaves

were well provided for, as some recent historians have suggested to have been the general nature of slavery in the United States (see Fogel and Engerman 1974); yet it is apparent from close inspection of these records, particularly the overseers' letters, that inadequacies were prevalent. Because the overseers' greatest concern was slave diseases, most of the information relating to slave care is concern with health care, and to a much lesser extent diet. References to clothing or improvements to slave dwellings are few. Thus, it is difficult to assess the material conditions of slavery at Butler Island on the basis of plantation records alone. It is intended that the archaeological data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 will amplify the descriptions of slave material conditions found in the records. On the other hand, some aspects of slave life mentioned in the records have no archaeological correlates, including slave diseases, mortality rates, disciplinary problems, and punishment. In the remainder of this chapter these topics are briefly examined.

The Kings' greatest concern was with the slaves' health care. Efforts therefore were made to place at Butler Island slaves who were adapted to the swampy lowlands. Just how these adaptive capacities were determined is not clear. Through mere observation such an assessment could have possibly been made. Roswell King, Sr., stated:

I landed the Negroes all safe and in good health. . . . I carried them to Tide Island [Butler Island] and you would have been much gratified to see their rejoicing, when they found they could drink the water out of the river, which is proof that they have been acquainted with the same soil & hopefully they will be healthy. . . . They landed very cheerful & happy, you have no people that can talk with them. (13 May 1803)

The above statement supports the suggestion that planters deliberately selected slaves adapted to a malarial environment for labor in rice fields. But it appears that even among members of the old, established slave population, their abilities to withstand the rice swamp was an ongoing concern:

It appears we have few Negroes here [Hampton] that are suitable for the rice swamp. We have at least 20 at the rice island which I would like to move if we had suitable highland for them. When you purchase more of course some of them will not be so profitable in a rice swamp and it is necessary we should arrange for land more suitable. (Roswell King, Sr., 22 August 1813)

Yet sickness was a prevailing problem at Butler Island despite efforts to place slaves there that were adapted to a malarial environment. An array of diseases plagued the island, including fevers of all kinds, measles, intestinal disorders, cholera, influenza, whooping cough, and others. Of these, cholera, influenza, and intestinal disorders were the most dreaded, and reports of these diseases frequently followed the occurrence of freshets, particularly in the 1830s, when freshets became annual events. At that time, slaves were often relocated to keep down debilitating diseases (Roswell King, Jr., 15 February 1835, 8 March 1835). Evidently, freshets contaminated the food and water supplies, which when consumed, caused illness and possibly death. The drinking of contaminated water, however, was seemingly a health problem at other times as well: "This is the sickly season for Negroes at the rice island. There is 14 to 15 in the hospital. None dangerously ill. I believe it is owing to their drinking river water" (Roswell King, Sr., 30 April 1815). In general, in the South contaminated water was frequently the source for epidemics of



of cholera, dysentery, diarrhea, typhoid, hepatitis (Savitt 1978:59).

By far the greatest sufferers among the slave population at Butler Island were infants and children. The infant mortality rate was higher there than at any of the other plantations in the Butler estate:

You will perceive that the mortality among infants is very high particularly at #6 this place [Butler Island] the state of the atmosphere is certainly injurious to infants. The proportion of young people at this place is far behind St. Simons. (Roswell King, Jr., 5 January 1829)

Deaths among infants at the Butler estate often comprised 50 percent or more of the annual deaths as indicated in Table 7. Infant mortality rates such as these were typical of the late antebellum period (Steckel 1979:95-96). Several conditions generated high levels of slave infant mortality, but recent studies have suggested that the predominant causes of slave infant deaths were Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), or crib death (Sutch 1976:283-292; Savitt 1978:122-127), tetani-related diseases (Savitt 1978:121-122), and occasionally infanticide (Savitt 1978:127-128). Although no definite cases of infanticide were reported at Butler Island, carelessness or neglect on the part of mothers was given as the cause of death for some infants (Roswell King, Sr., 16 June 1816; Roswell King, Jr., 17 September 1826). Most deaths among children between the ages of 2 and 10 years were believed to be due to worm infestation (Roswell King, Jr., 10 September 1835). Worms were a general health problem among black children in the Old South (Savitt 1978:128).

The treatment of diseases was usually handled by the Kings. In cases of major emergencies, a doctor was called upon to tend to the slaves. The frequently used medications listed on annual expense lists

Table 7  
Mortality Rates of Infants and Children of Slaves on the Butler Estate, 1819-1834

Year	Number (Total deaths)	Infants # %	Children (1-4) # %	Children (5-14) # %	Total # %
1819	19	9 47	3 16	3 15	15 79
1820	16	7 43	2 13	0 0	9 56
1821	27	3 11	5 18.5	3 11	11 40.5
1822	22	3 14	7 32	3 14	13 60
1823	14	12 86	0 0	0 0	12 36
1824	18	9 50	2 11	0 0	11 61
1825	28	9 32	5 18	1 3	15 53
1826	23	15 65	1 4	2 9	18 78
1827	39	24 62	5 13	2 5	31 80
1828	25	21 84	3 12	1 4	25 100
1829	16	8 50	3 19	2 12	13 81.5
1830	25	10 40	3 12	2 8	15 60
1831	20	15 75	2 10	1 5	18 90
1832	29	12 41	5 17	1 3	18 61
1833	34	21 62	5 14	0 0	26 76
1834	34	17 50	5 15	1 3	23 68
Total	389	200 51	56 15	25 6	281 72

included rhubarb, Spirits of Turpentine, red lavender, aloes, alum, magnesia, camphor, peppermint, castor oil, opium, and others. These medications were typical of the antebellum apothecary (Postell 1951:98-99). Black folk medicine was discouraged, although some slaves sought help from "negro doctors" despite objections (Roswell King, Sr., 10 August 1815).

Improvements in slave diet were apparently the primary actions taken to prevent illness. This was especially true for children. Meals were sometimes prepared separately for them to insure that they were properly fed:

There is no estate with so fine of crop of young Negroes as this Butler Island. There are over 100 hominy eaters, during the summer once or twice a week they are collected and have an extra meal of fish or pork soup which make each little negroe grow in the river swamp, I think.  
(Roswell King, Jr., 13 May 1827)

From time to time improvements were also made on the diets of adult slaves, such as increases in the quality or quantity of plantation rations. Generally, the amount of plantation ration varied according to the slave's occupation. Ditchers received the largest amounts of meat and corn; next in line were the drivers and mechanics; then came the field workers; and last were invalids and retired slaves who received the least amount of food (Butler Estate Papers, 1815b). Slaves kept vegetable gardens and raised chickens at Butler Island, but these were periodically destroyed by freshets (Roswell King, Jr., 28 July 1829). Hunting (Roswell King, Sr., 28 January 1829) and fishing also supplemented the diet, which is indicated by archeological evidence as well.

Despite all indications of an adequate diet, slaves frequently stole plantation rations stored in warehouses. Although most of these foods were sold for cash, some of them were probably used to supplement deficient diets. Stealing corn was particularly a problem: "Major Hopkins was telling me one day your Negroes had more to sell than any Negroes he ever known (I told him they were industrious) and he said they supported Darien in corn & cheap to" (Roswell King, Sr., 22 November 1806).

Stealing plantation produce, in fact, had become so widespread in the Altamaha estuary that planters attempted to prosecute local merchants in Darien for buying from slaves:

Tomorrow I am to go to a meeting in Darien to form a proclamation against the traders there for dealing with Negroes. The planters on St. Simons and in the vicinity of Darien have formed a coalition to prosecute all dealers with Negroes. (Roswell King, Sr., 23 September 1808)

Because incidences of stealing were frequently reported, stealing was evidently the number one disciplinary problem among the Butler slaves.

Second to stealing, slave runaways appear to have been a problem. It is curious that most runaways were intended to be short-term absences from the plantation. Oftentimes, one or two slaves, usually male, would go off to another plantation or sneak into Darien without permission (Roswell King, Sr., 31 December 1808, 10 May 1818; Roswell King, Jr., 28 January 1821). Few incidences of permanent runaways are indicated, and it appears that these were always unsuccessful attempts (Roswell King, Sr., 12 May 1804).

A variety of methods was used to punish slaves for stealing, running away, and other deviant behavior. The lash was used, but

banishment to hard labor at "Experiment" (Roswell King, Sr., 6 March 1813) or "Five Pound" (Kemble 1961 (1861):270) was prescribed for chronic offenders.\* Punishment also entailed the denial of fish, meat, molasses, clothes, rice, and forced labor on Sundays (Roswell King, Jr., 29 February 1829). Children were submerged in cold water as a means of punishment. On one occasion a young boy died shortly after he was dumped in water (Roswell King, Jr., 3 February 1829).

For the most part, overseers' letters provide very little information on the family or social life among the slaves. This is unfortunate, since this is an area in which archaeological data supply little, if any, information. A few scattered references do exist regarding family domestic quarrels, conflicts between drivers and workers at the slave villages, and the religious fervor among slaves. Perhaps oral history is the best resource of information for investigating these aspects of slave life (e.g. Blassingame 1972, 1976; Killion and Waller 1973; Escott 1979). It has been pointed out that overseers tended to write about issues they thought the planter should know about (Bassett 1968: 261). Consequently, overseers' letters generally reflect concerns relating to slave illness, death, and disciplinary problems. Given these concerns, it should be obvious that gaps would exist in interpretations of slavery derived solely from this resource. Although archaeology may not be able to provide data relating to the social or religious life of slaves, it can shed light on the specifics of slave material conditions.

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\*In the plantation records there is no reference to the plantation "Five Pound," but there are a number of references to "Experiment." Because they were both apparently located on Little St. Simons, the author is of the opinion that these names refer to the same plantation.

Virtually little or no information is contained in plantation records regarding the building materials used in slave housing, the size of these dwellings, or the wild food resources utilized by slaves, and many other details. These items of slave life are discussed in the remainder of this study.

### Archaeological Resources

Archaeological investigations were undertaken at Butler Island in the summer of 1978 under the direction of Dr. Lewis H. Larson, of West Georgia College, and in the spring and summer of 1979 by the author. The cyclical inundation practices of the Waterfowl Management Program necessitated that all fieldwork be conducted in the spring and summer months. This schedule, which involves the flooding of most of Butler Island in the fall and gradually removing the water from late winter to early spring, prohibited fieldwork before April. Even in April, many areas were still very damp, and some were not completely dry for fieldwork activities until June or July. Thus, the time spent at any one site depended, to a great extent, upon the degree of moisture present at the site during the time allocated for fieldwork. Fieldwork activities included surface reconnaissance by foot and by boat, mapping of sites, and limited excavations at slave settlement #1, the southernmost tidal mill, and slave settlement #4 (see Figure 7).

### Site Assessments

The sites designated in Figure 7 are presumably antebellum period sites. These have been located and identified by use of a combination of resources including historic maps, photographs, records, aerial photographs, informants, and archaeological assessments. Recent land

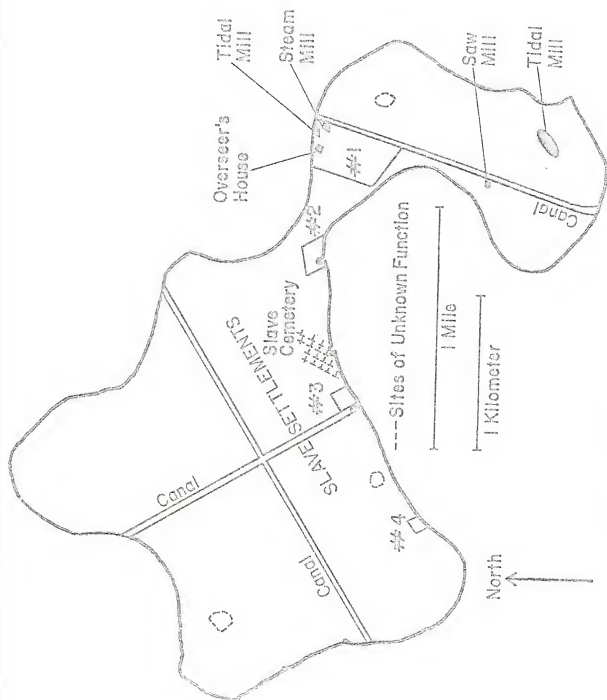


Figure 7. Historic Sites at Butler Island.

modifications at Butler Island are shown in Figure 8. The most obvious modifications are U.S. Highway 17, which roughly coincides with the canal east of Settlement #1 and Interstate 95, which crosses the island in the vicinity of settlement #2. Also, twentieth-century buildings, from the Huston occupation, are present at settlement #1. These are presently used for waterfowl management activities.

It was possible to predict potential areas for site location by the use of aerial photographs (of course with photographs having better resolution than that of Figure 8). Because Butler Island is generally a low-lying, grass-covered marshland, sites tended to be located on infrequent high spots, which are presently covered with trees and shrubs, notably, hackberry, persimmon, and fig. These areas of tree groves were easily identified in the aerial photographs. From surface reconnaissance, however, not all of these tree clumps were found to be sites. But all sites located were associated with this tree growth. Additionally, some sites, such as the slave settlements, were also indicated in aerial photographs by the detection of antebellum drainage ditches, which surround and separate these from former rice fields.

The identification for several sites is well documented. The slave settlements correspond exactly with the area designations I, II, III, and IV on the 1877 USGS Map (or Figure 6). Historic photographs provide suggestions for the placement of structures designated in slave settlement #1. The steam-powered mill is precisely identified by ruins of the two chimneys which are presently standing. A sketch drawn by Roswell King pinpoints the location of the sawmill and both tidal mills (Roswell King, Sr., 13 January 1813).





Figure 8. Present-Day View of Butler Island. (Note: Modern highway construction. I-95 crosses approximate location of settlement #2 and US-17 coincides with historic canal.)

The tidal mills were further identified by archaeological resources. In 1977, wooden timbers, presumably parts of a waterwheel, were unearthed following waterfowl management dredging activities. These timber fragments were found directly to the east (that is east of U.S. 17) of the tidal mill designated in settlement #1. Evidently, these timber fragments were the only remains suggestive of a mill or other structure. In other words, no other structural indications were evident. It was suggested by John Morgan, the archaeologist making the assessment at the time, that these remains did not identify a structural site at that location. He suggested, instead, that the timber fragments may have been deposited in that location by some other means, such as tidal action, which could have caused loose mill fragments to be moved to the area; activities associated with the construction of U.S. 17; or by an unknown agent.\* The present author agrees with this interpretation. In light of the historic evidence which indicates that a tidal mill was located at settlement #1, Morgan's interpretation has been substantiated. Evidently, these wooden timbers were part of that tidal mill structure.

The other tidal mill located on the southern edge of the island was partially excavated. Evidently, the mill structure which housed the milling machinery was built upon a rich deposit of oyster shell associated with aboriginal ceramics and food bone remains. Tidal action for operating the mill was supplied by a series of canals that were controlled by floodgates and trunks. The water was stored in an impounding pond, and an undershot waterwheel was turned by the rise and fall

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\*John Morgan, Jr., Staff Archaeologist, Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of National Resources, Atlanta, Georgia, personal communication, 1978.

of the tide (Doar 1970:23). These canals and the impounding pond were detected in aerial photographs. Subsurface testing at the site uncovered the structural underpinnings of the mill, the bed of the water-wheel, and a millstone.

Previous archaeological assessments made in 1956 were used to locate the slave cemetery (Caldwell nd; Sanders nd). Again, through waterfowl management dredging activities, a number of coffins were unearthed in the area indicated as the slave cemetery (see Figure 7). At that time, a dragline cut through the south edge of the cemetery smashing several wooden coffins and exposing others in the profile north of the dragline. It was noted that the coffins were made of cypress and that the skeletal material was poorly preserved. Most of the coffins were evidently those of infants, a finding which supports the historical evidence of a high infant mortality rate at Butler Island. On the basis of information obtained from local informants, Sanders (nd) identified the cemetery as a slave burial ground. These informants claimed to have had ancestors buried there. The location of a cemetery could not be found in the plantation records, but both Fanny Kemble (1961 (1863):141) and Francis Leigh (1883:72) mention a slave burial ground. Unfortunately, neither identified its location. Given the number of infant burials, and the fact that a slave cemetery or two was located at Butler Island, it was decided that this site once served as a slave graveyard.

The sites of "unknown function" could not be identified on the basis of visible archaeological remains occurring on the surface. Suggestions of possible function, however, can be offered on the basis of

historic resources. The site east of settlement #1 is purported to be a slave cemetery. But surface evidence of a burial ground in the form of headboards, tombstones, or distinctive Afro-American burial patterns (Combes 1974) is lacking. Because of the dense tree cover, it is possible that subtle evidence of a graveyard was overlooked. Attempts to locate coffins by probing with a metal rod proved to be unsuccessful. Although no superficial evidence indicated that this area was a graveyard or, for that matter, a site, its size and location strongly suggest that it was a site of some type. Because of the lack of time and resources, its function could not be ascertained. Additional historical research and fieldwork are needed to determine its function.

The site located between slave settlements #3 and #4 appears to have been a mill or other industrial site. No structural features are evident, but a nearby impounding pond and the site's layout appear to be similar to that of the excavated tidal mill. More specifically, historic evidence suggests that this was the site of a sugar mill. Roswell King placed the "sugar works" at Butler Island halfway between slave settlements #3 and #4 (Roswell King, Sr., 20 April 1816). This is the only location in that area indicative of a site. Only through future excavations can this suggestion be confirmed.

Like the previously described site, it is believed that the site in the northwest corner of Butler Island is also a mill or an industrial site. The evidence pointing to this assessment is more conclusive than for the other sites of unknown function. Again, an impounding pond similar to that of the tidal mill is present at this site. The recovery of wooden fragments identical to the excavated waterwheel further

supports this interpretation. Additionally, the base of a brick wall along the drainage ditch indicated that a rather large structure was once present on the premises, and a scatter of bricks, presumably from a chimney fall was also found. A padlock lying on the surface has been found to be identical to ones uncovered at the slave site. It is believed that the padlock and brick type (Savannah greys) suggest that this component of the site is temporally antebellum. Unfortunately, its antebellum function could not be determined. On the other hand, the sites's postbellum function is well known by local informants. In the twentieth century, the site was utilized for the manufacture of illegal moonshine whiskey until it was discovered by the authorities in the early 1950s. Archaeological evidence of this moonshine operation is still apparent in the form surface debris, including still parts, corn liquor crockery fragments, and Mason jars. This site also has a pre-historic component.

Prehistoric components were found to be associated with the southern tidal mill, settlement #3, and the presumed mill site in the northwest corner of the island. These prehistoric occupations are identified by oyster shell and aboriginal ceramics ranging in time from fiber tempered to complicated stamped. From the very limited samples collected, most of these ceramics appear to be cord marked and checked stamped. It is, however, premature to suggest a cultural association from such slim evidence. A problem is presented by these prehistoric deposits. It is not at all certain whether the oyster shell was brought in at a later time to make "high spots" in the swamp or was placed in its present locations by prehistoric peoples. At the tidal mill site,

the former interpretation does seem plausible, but historic evidence suggests otherwise. Prior to the construction of this tidal mill, King describes the "oyster bank" and suggests placing a mill at that location (Roswell King, Sr., 13 January 1813). In a later letter, King describes the depth of the oyster shell with astonishment: "The oyster shell are 6 feet underground, and the water runs in like a spring" (Roswell King, Sr., 6 March 1813). The two letters seem to suggest that the oyster bank was there long before King or Butler thought of building a mill at that location. At least, it does appear that King was not responsible for bringing the oyster shell to Butler Island. It is possible that King's predecessor was responsible for this action. These aboriginal shell dumps have been greatly disturbed by post-depositional construction and the robbing of shell, presumably for the making of tabby. Therefore, it is doubtful that the present size and shape of these shell deposits can help to determine whether or not they were made by prehistoric occupants of Butler Island. Unfortunately, the prehistory of the Altamaha delta is virtually unknown. Consequently, these shell deposits may be prehistoric sites and not aboriginal shell brought in at a later time.

#### Slave Village Sites

The investigators were most interested in the slave settlements, and an effort was made to determine the archaeological integrity of these. Investigations began at settlement #1 for several reasons. First, the site's location, just off U.S. 17, makes it more accessible to the vehicle than the other slave sites. Second, unlike the other slave sites, it is not subjected to management flooding in the fall and winter

(it only becomes inundated during naturally occurring floods), thereby making the preservation of organic materials better than that of the other sites.\* Third, the approximate locations of certain structures at settlement #1 are well documented in historic photographs. However, with the exception of the steam mill ruins, no surface indications of these structures presently exist.

The areas in and around settlement #1 have been subject to considerable plowing and dredging. Consequently, a great deal of cultural debris was found to be lying on the ground surface. The first objective for fieldwork activities at settlement #1 was to walk the area, collect the surface materials, and note the location of these scatters. It was hoped that these collections would help to identify structural features or other specialized activity areas. These collected materials ranged from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Unfortunately, they did not provide indications for the location of features.

The next objective was to locate the two rows of slave dwellings known to have existed at the site. It was decided to make a contour map to help identify these slave dwellings. Presumably, a contour map would indicate by subtle rises the location of structures. A very rudimentary map was prepared, and it provided some indications for the approximate location of the two rows. Two test trenches (1.5 x 4 meters), designated as Test 1 and Test 2, were laid out to test one of these subtle rises (see Figure 9). This particular area was chosen because a considerable amount of cultural debris was present on the ground surface, notably construction materials.

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\*See discussion regarding the preservation of archaeological materials at Butler Island in Chapter 5.



Test 2 Test 1

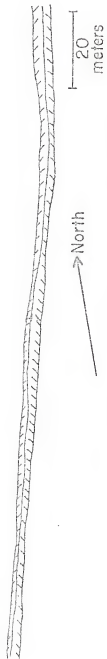


Figure 9. Extent of Excavations at Settlement #1.



The units were excavated in arbitrary levels of 15 centimeters. Excavated materials were dry-screened by use of a 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth. All beginning levels were screened because it was not certain where the antebellum component began. It was during this first attempt at excavation that the archaeologists became painfully aware of the difficulty of removing, by shovel, and screening this wet, clayey soil. Screening was found to be a very slow and time-consuming process, but alternatives to screening were unacceptable. The Noel-Hume method of excavation, in which every artifact is recovered by trowel (1974:104), would have been just as time consuming, and later troweling activities attested to this presumption. To have abandoned screening altogether would have resulted in the recovery of few small items characteristic of slave material culture such as fragments of pipe bowls and stems, beads, and buttons. In light of the alternatives, screening was not curtailed. But the commitment made to screening sacrificed the areal extent of the subsurface testing. This was found to be the case at other sites as well.

The excavated materials indicated that the site is very much disturbed. No in situ structural features were uncovered although most of the materials were in fact clay bricks. Antebellum artifacts dominated the recovered materials but were mixed with modern debris throughout the first two strata. Below these layers, few cultural materials were recovered. At the base of the excavation, evidence of the old cypress root system was unearthed and the watertable was encountered (see Figure 10).

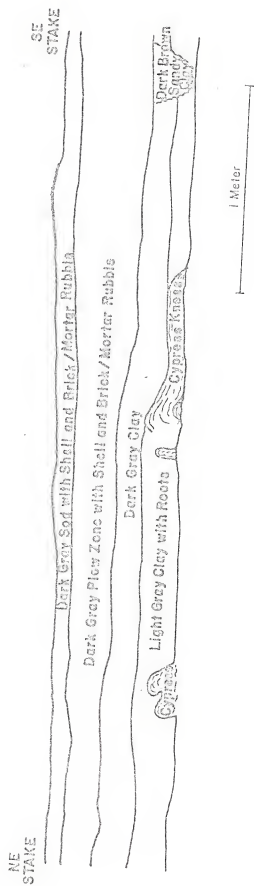


Figure 10. Stratigraphic Profile of Settlement #1.

On the basis of the artifacts recovered from other slave sites in coastal Georgia, the antebellum materials at settlement #1 are suggestive of the slavery status. The small sample of artifacts recovered and their disturbed nature, however, prohibits the use of these materials in most of the interpretations offered in this study. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the archaeological resources unearthed at settlement #1 is to provide evidence of the earliest historic occupation at Butler Island. A few eighteenth-century artifacts were recovered, including fragments of slipware (Noel-Hume 1976:98-108) (see Figure 11) and an eighteenth-century Spanish reale (see Figure 12). The precise date of the coin is unclear, but the first two digits, 1 and 7, suggest that the coin was manufactured in the 1700s. These artifacts provide the only vestiges of a pre-nineteenth century occupation at Butler Island. Further excavations at settlement #1 are recommended to uncover additional evidence of this occupation.

Slave sites #2 and #3 were not tested. From field inspection and aerial photographs, it was decided that slave site #2 was completely destroyed by the construction of Interstate 95. In the vicinity where I-95 crosses Butler Island, a tremendous quantity of sand was deposited after dredging activities associated with the highway's construction. On the surface of this sand, antebellum materials were found, including pipe bowls, shell-edged pearlware, and Savannah grey bricks. The presence of these artifacts to this specific area supplied the only archaeological evidence of slave settlement #2. Slave settlement #3 was surveyed very briefly. Two chimney falls (identical to the ones discussed at slave settlement #4) were located. Unfortunately,

Figure 11. Eighteenth-Century Slipware Fragments from Settlement #1.

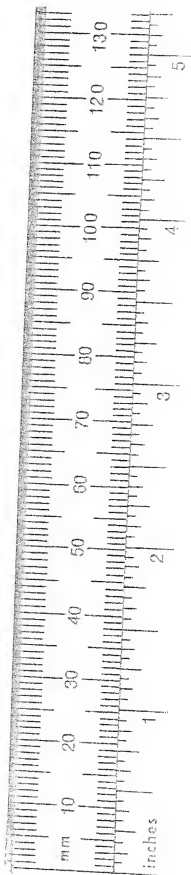
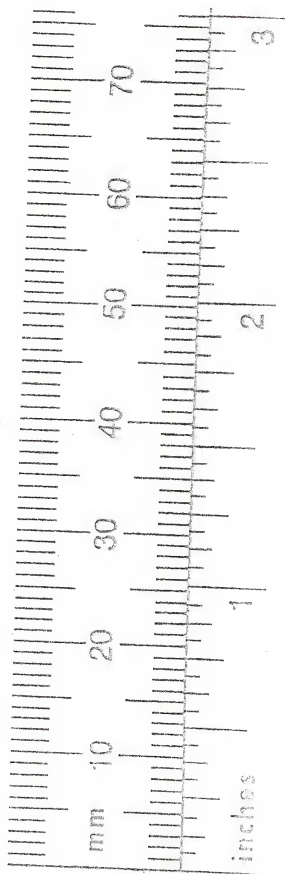
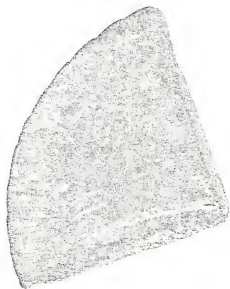


Figure 12. Spanish real, "Mexico Mint," from Settlement #4.



the funds available were insufficient for the time needed to map and test these sites.

Ultimately, the investigations of slave villages at Butler Island centered upon slave settlement #4. This site was evidently the best preserved of the four settlements. Visually apparent above the ground were five chimney falls. The clearing of the chimneys revealed that these were H-shaped hearths, presumably of duplex slave dwellings with central fireplaces. A contour map of this site was made in the summer of 1978 (see Figure 13), and it was decided at that time to return the following spring and summer to investigate the site further.

The field strategy devised for settlement #4 during the 1979 field season was twofold: first, two or more of the slave dwellings would be tested for structural information and, second, a subsurface testing procedure would be developed to locate other activity areas hidden beneath the ground surface. It was hoped that outbuildings, concentrated refuse dumps, wells, and privies could be identified from subsurface testing. The testing scheme developed utilized a systematic random sampling procedure. At 10 meter intervals, a row of posthole tests was made every 5 meters. In the beginning, a hand posthole digger was used, but it was soon replaced with a pointed shovel, the latter being better suited for the clayey soil. Although the shovel did not yield tests of a consistent size, most tests ranged from 25 to 33 centimeters. A total of 222 tests were made. These tests, however, did not provide useful information for delineating areas of refuse dumps, wells, or privies. Artifacts recovered from the tests were concentrated in and around slave dwellings. The exception to this rule was the uncovering of structures



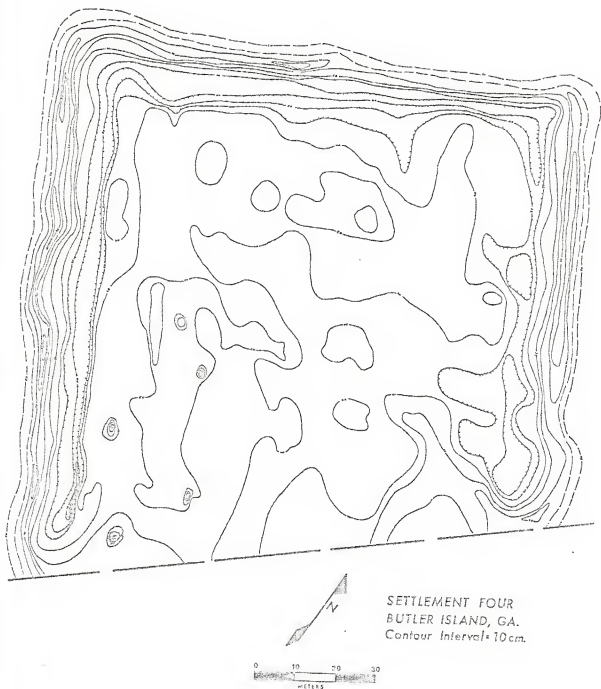


Figure 13. Contour Map of Settlement #4. (Note five chimney falls in lower left.)

six and seven to the right of the slave dwellings (see Figure 14). Evidence of these structures was first identified from posthole tests. Later, through probing and small test pits, the approximate dimensions of the structures were determined. Structure 6 was found to be a brick floor and structure seven, the foundation of a large structure, possibly a rice barn.

Excavation of the slave dwellings proceeded with the establishment of excavation units from an arbitrary point designated N100E100. Initially, the soil was removed in arbitrary levels of 15 centimeters, but later this was changed to the removal of natural strata. For the most part, three strata were recognized at slave settlement #4. These include grey silty loam, grey clayey loam, and grey clay with red and yellow flecks (see Figure 15). These soil classifications were determined by soil analyses undertaken after fieldwork activities (see Appendix 1 for soil descriptions). All cultural materials were deposited within the first two strata, but the clayey loam yielded a higher concentration of artifacts than the silty loam. Evidently, the clayey loam represents the old humus zone of the antebellum period. With the exception of intrusive features such as postholes, no cultural materials were found in the clay. All excavated materials were water-screened through 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth. From the experience at settlement #1, it was felt that water-screening would maximize recovery as well as aid in the removal of the sticky clay and silt from the artifacts.

The vast majority of the artifacts from settlement #4 were of antebellum date. In fact, only one artifact was found to be postbellum.

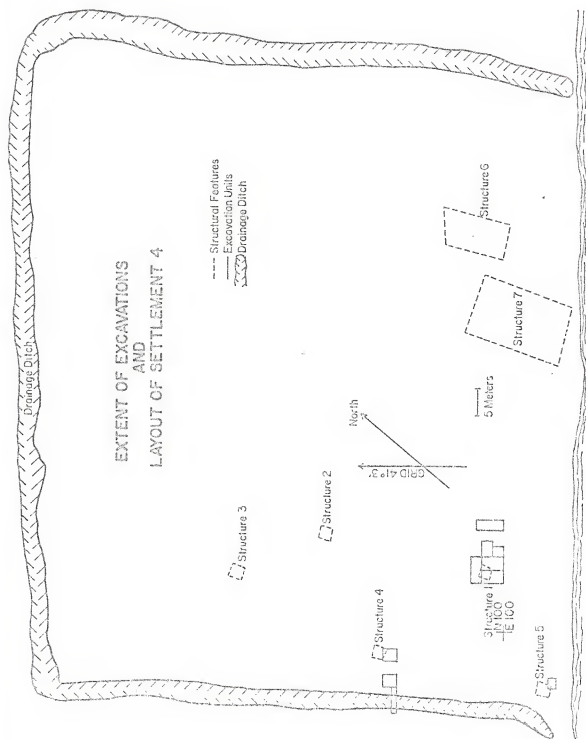


Figure 14. Excavation of Settlement #4.

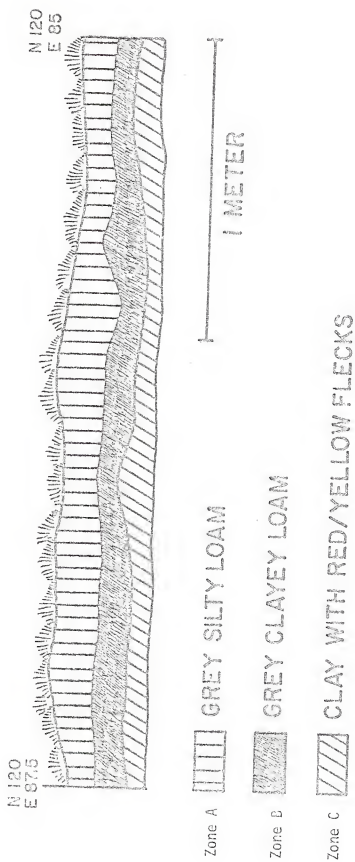


Figure 15. Stratigraphic Profile, Settlement #4.

This was a modern-day shotgun shell, presumably the artifact of recent duck hunting in the area. Unlike in settlement #1, no eighteenth-century materials were recovered. This may be due to the fact that settlement #4 was not constructed until 1803 (Roswell King, Sr., 22 October 1803). Thus, the date 1803 established a terminus post quem for the site. The site was evidently not intensively occupied after the Civil War, since postbellum artifacts were virtually absent. All indications have suggested that the site is temporally antebellum, thereby making it a slavery site. Three of the five slave dwellings were tested. These structures and the excavated materials are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

## CHAPTER 4 SETTLEMENT PATTERNS OF COASTAL SLAVE COMMUNITIES

### The Determinants of Plantation Settlement Patterns

The determinants of settlement patterns have been defined as those "classes of factors that interact with each other to produce the spatial organizations of a social group" (Trigger 1968:53). These determinants can be conceived of in terms of three levels of settlement: first, the individual structure; second, the arrangements of structures within a community; and third, the manner in which communities are distributed over the landscape (Trigger 1968:55).

At slave villages, what were the factors that determined spatial arrangements? In order to answer this question, it may be necessary to examine the plantation settlement as a whole. Certainly, topographic, economic, and social factors influenced, if they did not determine, the spatial arrangements of most plantations. Precisely what these factors were at coastal plantations and the ways these were manifested at Butler Island are briefly explored in this chapter. To date, very little has been written on the subject of plantation settlement pattern. Archaeological studies are especially few in number (see Otto 1975:18-28; Lewis 1979). The attempt is made in this discussion to synthesize from available settlement pattern data obtained from plantation plats; published works in anthropology, history, and geography; and the archaeological resources uncovered at Butler Island.

Generally, the spatial aspects of plantation communities were similar throughout the South. At the "administrative nucleus" were located the planter's or manager's house, service buildings, and the dwellings of house or skilled servants. Processing equipment and storage houses formed the "technical nucleus" (Wolf 1959:137). Apparently, convenience provided the key for the location of technical equipment (Smith 1936:22) since it was placed at the administrative center, or located separately, or associated with slave quarters (Prunty 1955; Otto 1975:18-19). On small plantations, slave dwellings were located near the plantation house, but large plantations tended to have one or more slave villages located a considerable distance away (Stampp 1956:272).

Reasons for the division of slaves into separate villages are not clear. Polderland construction at rice plantations may have necessitated this pattern. The placement of structures or the centers of plantation activities was often dependent upon the availability of high lands at rice plantations. Structures were located either on hammocks adjacent to rice fields (Smith 1936:22), or high areas had to be created. But the advantages of a close proximity to the fields and the danger associated with a large assemblage of black people (Scott 1973:75) better explain the prevalence of the segmented slave village pattern in other cash crop regions. The Butler family plantation records provide further suggestions for the establishment of this pattern. Slave villages were efficient means to keep account of a large number of slaves. Slaves were listed and the amounts of crops planted or harvested were often recorded by slave villages. It is also possible

that provisions were accounted for and distributed by these settlements.

Despite the advantages of segregating a large number of slaves into smaller villages, some planters of large productive units evidently preferred to keep all their slaves in the same location. This was particularly true of interior plantations (e.g. Smith 1973:144, plat of Glendownwer estate). Exceptions such as these were also to be found in the Georgia tidewater. For example, a plat of the Hopeton rice plantation (see Johnson 1930:63; Prunty 1955:464) reveals that all "500 slaves" (Lane 1973:196) were evidently located in quarters near the administrative nucleus. Here again, the land use practices associated with Hopeton's unique polderland construction may account for its arrangement rather than a preference to have slaves nearby.

Within the slaves' quarters, dwellings were typically arranged in rows along roads or streets forming a square or rectangle of buildings (Prunty 1955:465). This pattern was established for tidewater plantations and later replicated in other areas of the South (Stampp 1956:292). The basis for this arrangement appears to have been clearly functional as it permitted easy cleaning and inspection of slave dwellings (Flanders 1933:153; Otto 1975:24) and perhaps easy access to them by wagons or carts.

But plantation layouts were not just functional. These spatial arrangements expressed the social structure of plantation society, which reflects a chain of command of owners, managers, overseers, permanent laborers, and seasonal workers (Wolf 1959:137). The large plantation plan (which has been under discussion here) with the big house, numerous outbuildings, offices, and slave villages was a standard



set by the superordinate planter class (Corbett 1941:14). Although regional differences were evident in architectural styles and construction materials, plantation arrangements were characterized by broad similarities (Otto 1975:24). It has been suggested that the presence of these similarities expressed the social ideals of the planter elite (Corbett 1941:13-14).

Yet, to a lesser extent, plantation settlement patterns may have expressed ideals other than those of a generalized planter elite. In some cases, planter ethnicity or for that matter slaves' ethnicities may have influenced settlement patterns. It is a well acknowledged fact that southern antebellum architecture represents a blend of ethnic influences (Kniffen 1965; Glassie 1968). Recently, the Afro-American contribution to this architectural style has been investigated (Fine 1973:11-26; Anthony 1976; Vlach 1978:122-138). Ethnic influences are also evident in plantation layouts. Many of the early colonial plantations were intended to resemble medieval manors (e.g. Phillips 1929:49, photograph of Mulberry Castle). Some postcolonial plantations also exhibit the owner's ethnicity. For example, the spatial arrangement of the big house and outbuildings at the Choclat plantation at Sapelo Island, Georgia, is similar to a French Chatelet.\* Choclat, however, was atypical among Georgia tidewater plantations. It was not engaged in the

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\*Morgan R. Crock, West Georgia College, Carrollton, Georgia, personal communication, 1980. The Choclat ruins were mapped in 1974 by Crock, who later discovered that the arrangement of these buildings was similar to a French Chatelet. The present author pursued this suggestion further and found that Choclat's layout was not only characteristic of a French Chatelet, but that it was similar to contemporary French settlement plans, circa 1786-1800 in general (see Mauban 1945:plate 18).

full-time production of cash crops for a world economy. Instead, it was a retirement home and subsistence-based farm for its owners, which utilized numerous slaves in the work force (Lovell 1932:110-111). Perhaps, this difference in economic function may account for Choctaw's distinctive spatial arrangement.

The Afro-American influence in plantation settlement patterns is more difficult to document than that of the Euro-American planter. Although the evidence of African-styled architecture has been observed in a variety of plantation contexts, notably in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana (Anthony 1976), the evidence of a similar influence in plantation layouts is slim and remains untested. The possibility of this influence, however, is suggested in the community layouts of slave quarters at two antebellum plantations on the Atlantic Seaboard. The arc-shaped arrangement of slave dwellings at the Kingsley plantation (Fairbanks 1974) and a horseshoe-shaped arrangement recently uncovered in coastal South Carolina\* are suggestive of traditional African village layouts found in several areas of Africa (Denyer 1978:20). At this stage of research, however, such a suggestion is speculative and awaits further investigation.

Because plantation settlement patterns have not been systematically investigated, it is difficult to enumerate the factors which determined these spatial organizations. Undoubtedly, most arrangements were designed to be functional to meet the environmental challenge and economic needs. It is likely that cultural ideals, ethnicity, and

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\*Patrick Garrow, Chief Archaeologist, Soil Systems Incorporated, Marietta, Georgia, personal communication, 1979.

other unexplored factors also had an impact on these patterns. The extent that these additional factors influenced plantation arrangements remains unanswered.

#### Slave Community Organizations at Butler Island

The hypotheses outlined in Chapter 1 assume that plantation spatial organizations were primarily functional and that these reflect adaptations to specific crop requirements. Butler Island's settlement patterns conform to those of most tidewater rice plantations, specifically those lacking sufficient highlands. Plantation structures were evidently built upon high areas that were either naturally occurring or artifacts of polderland construction. In the placement of slave villages, the latter appears to have been the case. The slave villages were strategically located at the southern end of the island, where they were accessible overland by the main dikes and by water along the main canals and the river (see Figures 7 and 8).

Settlement #1 was the administrative nucleus for the plantation and it included the overseer's house, blacksmithing and shoemaking sheds, warehouses, and a meat-curing house. Also, the largest technical nucleus for the island, a tidal mill and steam mill, and the greatest number of slave dwellings were located there. Photographs of structures once located at settlement #1 (Cate 1925; Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) provide some indications of the former spatial arrangements at this site. The technical equipment was east of the overseer's house, the slave quarters to the south, and the other administrative buildings are believed to have been to the west (see Scott 1961:57). For the Butler Island slaves, settlement #1 must also have served as headquarters. The slave



Figure 16. Overseer's House.



Figure 17. Tidal Mill and Boat Landing.



Figure 18. Slave Cabin.

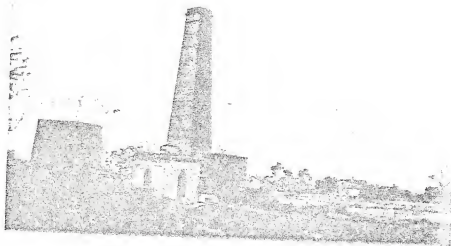


Figure 19. Steam Mill Ruins.



Figure 20. Linear Arrangement of Slave Dwellings.

hospital, which occasionally served as a chapel and recreational center, was located there (Kemble 1961 (1863):131).

Each of the remaining slave villages contained technical equipment for the processing and storage of plantation staples, in addition to slave dwellings. As indicated from the archaeological evidence from settlement #4, these structures were located opposite the slave dwellings forming a small technical nucleus. Settlement #2 contained long-staple cotton processing equipment, and the slaves living there were possibly engaged only in the production of cotton. Both settlements #3 and #4 contained rice storage facilities and were equidistant from sugar processing machinery (Butler Estate Papers, 1815a; Roswell King, Sr., 20 April 1816), thereby making these units equipped for the production of rice and sugar. Additionally, each settlement had its own plantation specialists who produced items to be used for planting activities as well as for household needs.

To a certain extent, the slave villages at Butler Island represent smaller self-contained productive units of a larger plantation complex. Frequently large areas of ricelands of 1,000 to 1,200 acres were divided up into smaller units of 300 to 400 acres. These smaller units operated as separate plantations (House 1954a:150). Apparently, planters found these smaller units to be more efficient than larger ones. Thus, the subdivision of slaves into villages on ricelands may have developed from several factors, including polderland construction, economic efficiency, and social control. The impact these self-contained villages had upon slave lifeways needs to be investigated. At Butler Island these villages tended to isolate the slaves from the other centers of the

plantation complex. The only time a slave needed to go to the plantation headquarters at settlement #1 was to see the overseer, head driver, to go to the hospital, or for an occasional church or other meeting. Although slaves at one village probably intermingled with slaves at the other villages, most of their time was spent in the rice fields adjacent to their settlement or at their own quarters. From the planter's perspective, this isolation maintained economic efficiency and social control. But for the slaves, it may have substantially reinforced the very limited contact prevailing between blacks and whites as well as between acculturated blacks and those that were not so acculturated. Within these isolated villages slaves had the opportunity to retain African folkways. Perhaps this explains why the rice coast has preserved more evidence of African retentions than any other former antebellum crop region within the United States (Herskovits (1958:120). The addition of African imports to the rice coast long after the ban on the Atlantic Slave Trade (see Wells 1967) may have further encouraged this cultural development.

#### The Community Plan at Slave Settlement #4

Although very limited testing has been undertaken at settlement #4, some general statements can be made regarding the site's internal spatial arrangements. While it may be possible that the periodic inundation of the site has resulted in the lateral displacement of archaeological materials, evidence of this disruptive action is lacking. If the materials were displaced, the horizontal distribution of the archaeological materials would appear to be random, that is, having no

patterned relationship (Garrison in Schiffer and Gummerman 1977:154). Fortunately, the evidence from both the posthole testing and the mapped artifacts in and around the slave dwellings strongly indicated a non-random, patterned distribution. Thus, it is doubtful that inundation has adversely affected the distributional patterns of cultural features at the present time.

According to the 1815 inventory, eight dwellings were located at this site. Assuming that no additional dwellings were added after that date, slave structures were possibly arranged in two rows, three in each, and with two structures at the end of the two rows (like structure three; see Figure 14). It is suggested that the dwellings were arranged in this fashion because of the considerable construction debris, presumably from slave dwellings, found in the canal directly below the site. The canal is an artifact of Waterfowl Management activity, and it appears that when it was constructed the archaeological remains for several structures at the slave site were destroyed.

On a main dike, adjacent to the canal and formed by the dredging for it, artifacts characteristic of slave material culture were found to be lying on the surface. Both materials recovered from the canal and the dike suggest that the additional slave dwellings once located at this slave site were in the location of the present canal, in line with the mapped structures located at the site.

The two very large structures, six and seven, were apparently part of the technical nucleus. All indications suggest that structure seven was a rice barn. On the 1815 inventory, a rice barn with the dimensions 60 by 44 feet is listed. The dimensions of structure seven were found to be 18.4 by 13.4 meters, which closely matches these dimensions.



The only remains uncovered of the rice barn were its cypress foundations. No artifacts were found in association with it.

The function of structure six, the brick floor, could not be determined. Unfortunately, the 1815 inventory does not list any other buildings at settlement #4 that would have been used for rice production. Therefore, it must have been added after 1815. It is possible that it may have been used as a threshing floor, since evidence of a super-structure was not identified with the floor. But no indications of brick threshing floors have been found in the plantation records. All references indicate the use of tar threshing floors. Moreover, a soil analysis taken from below the floor suggests that the brick floor was superimposed upon an earthen floor. From small test pits made to determine the dimensions of the floor, numerous soil concretions resembling hardpan in texture were recovered. The analysis suggested that these concretions may have been part of an old earthen floor, and what appeared to have been straw remains were found in these concretions. This interpretation is plausible, however, only if the distribution of these concretions was restricted to a limited area (see Appendix 1). Because this soil type was limited to the area around structure six, it is highly probably that these materials represent the former presence of an earthen floor. In rice processing, earthen floors were often associated with winnowing houses, but no archaeological evidence of winnowing posts was identified. Perhaps, the floor was part of a shed or warehouse. The possibilities regarding the function of the floor are numerous. But the size of the structure and its relation to the rice barn strongly suggest that it was a specialized structure,

presumably used in the production of rice, rather than a domestic dwelling.

No surely identifiable nonstructural features, such as wells or privies, were uncovered. As for wells, the historical evidence indicates that the Butler Island slaves drank water from the river (Roswell King, Sr., 30 April 1815; Kemble 1961 (1863):189). Looking at the Altamaha River today, it is hard to imagine that the river was ever clean enough for drinking or bathing purposes. Nonetheless, if the river regularly supplied water for drinking, then wells would not be needed, and this archaeological feature would not be present. The absence of privies is more easily explained than that of wells. On many plantations slaves were not provided with privies. In fact, privies were not used extensively in many areas of the South until the twentieth century (Savitt 1978:60). Evidence of a privy is suggested from the drainage ditch next to structure four (see Figure 14). From a trench designed to test the drainage ditch adjacent to structure four (see Figure 21), several vertical posts were uncovered. These posts appeared to have been part of a small structure, possibly a privy or washstand. In addition, soil samples taken from the drainage ditch had an extremely high phosphorus content when compared with samples from other areas of the site. Although the high phosphoric level suggests that this area was a privy, the test for human bacteria was negative (see Appendix 1). Therefore, positive evidence of a well or privy at settlement #4 is lacking.

Whatever the function of the small structure, wooden fragments recovered from the ditch and the soil analysis indicate that the

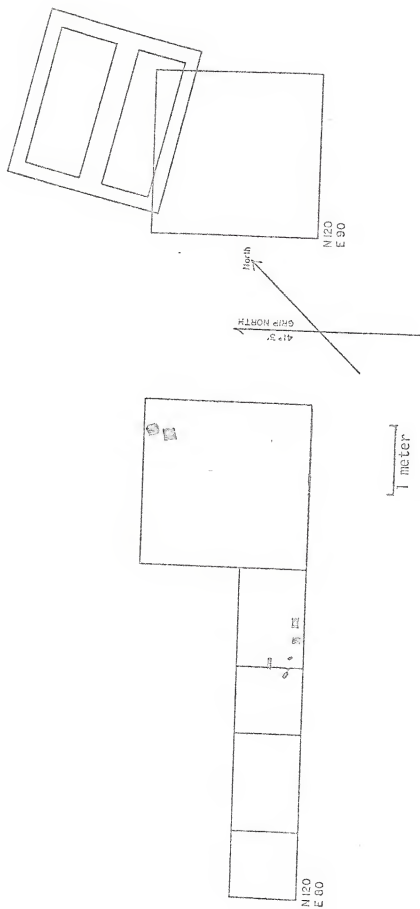


Figure 21. Extent of Excavation at Structure Four.

structure was painted with red oil-base paint. Red ochre was frequently listed on the annual expense and supply lists. Evidently, the ochre was used to paint some of the plantation structures. The reasons for painting the small structure red, or for that matter painting it at all, is unknown.

If the ditch did not contain human waste, another explanation for the high phosphoric content of the soil is suggested by the rich deposit of organic refuse. Apparently, the ditch was used intensively for the deposit of refuse, particularly organic refuse. Peach pits, shoe leather, and charred bone, as well as inorganic materials, were recovered below the mottled silt (evidently fill) and continued below the water table (see Figure 22). Unfortunately, excavations of the ditch had to be terminated since the archaeologists lacked an appropriate water pumping device to continue excavations below the water table. Clearly, this portion of the drainage ditch was used for refuse disposal.

No other concentrated refuse dumps were uncovered. Small post-hole tests placed along other locations of the drainage ditch did not yield any artifacts. This suggests that the refuse from the ditch next to structure four is most likely from that household. Another possible location for concentrated refuse disposal was the river. The site's close proximity to the river suggests that trash was likely to have been regularly discarded in it. All other refuse recovered at the site was concentrated in and around the slave dwellings. No evidence of trash pits or patterns of refuse disposal could be delineated (see South 1977: 47-80). Both inorganic and organic refuse were found together in similar proportions both inside and outside the house. Also, it is

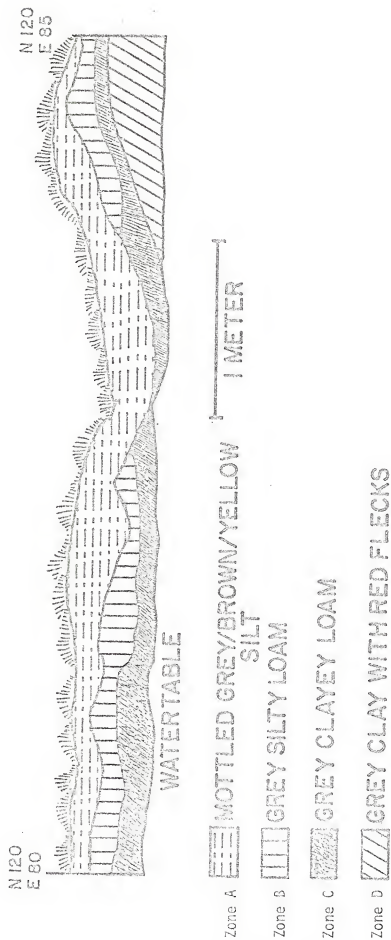


Figure 22. Stratigraphic Profile of Drainage Ditch.

possible that the pigs and chickens kept by the slaves consumed a great deal of the organic refuse. At any rate, no intentional patterns of trash disposal were identified.

The large areas of the site in which no cultural materials were uncovered were possibly used for gardening. The stratigraphy of the posthole tests taken from the area above the structures (see Figure 14) suggests that the ground has been turned by a plow more intensively than in areas near the dwellings. This overturned soil may be the artifact of postoccupational plowing which is evident from visible plow furrows all over the site. The plowing activity appears to have been minimal as indicated by little scattering of the artifacts.

The spatial arrangements at slave settlement #4 provide some indications of an accommodation to rice culture. The overall layout of the site is typical of tidewater patterns in general, and these patterns have been observed at rice plantations (Olmsted 1968 (1856):416-417, 421-422). On the other hand, the absence of wells, the specialized structures associated with rice production, and the use of drainage ditches for refuse disposal and possibly for human elimination appear to have been practices developed specifically for slave life in a deltaic, marshland habitat. Limited testing, however, cannot be ruled out as a factor which may have skewed the findings used for the interpretations offered here. Additional excavations are needed to demonstrate that these archaeological resources of community organizations reflect slave life on the Georgia rice coast.

### Slave Dwellings

Unfortunately none of the slave dwellings at settlement #4 were completely excavated. Testing at structure one and the historic photographs of slave houses at settlement #1 (Figures 18 and 20) provide evidence of architectural style and some specific construction details. All of the slave structures at Butler Island were evidently duplex dwellings with central chimneys. This "two pen, saddle-bag" house type (Kniffen 1965:556) was commonly used for slave housing throughout the South. Single-pen dwellings, however, were equally as common. Regional differences to this basic architectural style were most evident in construction materials. In the piedmont and interior coastal plain, slave houses were frequently built with timber logs. Frame, brick, and tabby constructions were typical of the tidewater (Otto 1975:104-105).

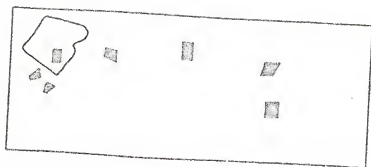
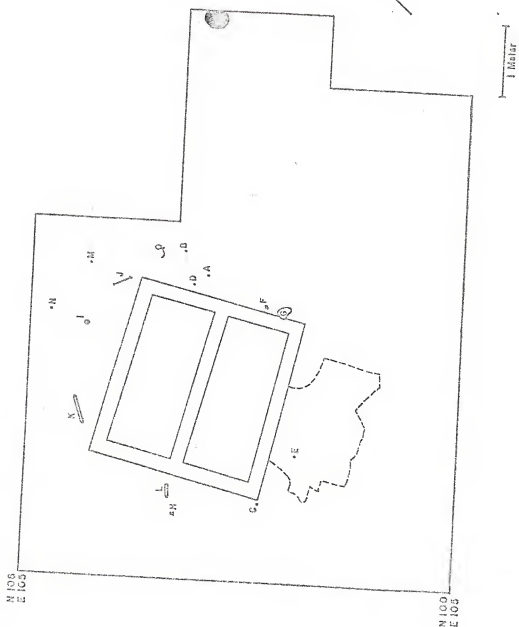
All indications are that the slave dwellings at Butler Island were of frame construction. Contemporary accounts of nineteenth-century visitors to Butler Island (Kemble 1961 (1863):67; Lane 1973:194), historic photographs, and archaeological resources support this finding. These structures were evidently made of cypress. The walls were presumably vertical board-and-batten as indicated in Figure 18. This is not surprising because cypress, a very durable building material (Panshin 1964:489), was abundant in the rice swamps. In fact, all wooden remains uncovered at Butler Island have been identified as cypress. At settlement #4, structure one provided evidence of cypress construction. In Figure 23 the dotted line represents the outline of a large fragment of hand-hewn cypress, possibly the remains of the floor. Additional fragments were found scattered around the chimney.

Figure 23. The Extent of Excavations at Structure One, Settlement #4.

Key to Mapped Artifacts

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| A. Hinge                         | I. Padlock                                       |
| B. Adze                          | J. Hinge   |
| C. Scissors                      | K. Wood fragment                                 |
| D. Rounded chisel or gouge       | L. Wood fragment                                 |
| E. Large fragment of black flint | M. Hoe   |
| F. Pintle                        | N. Padlock                                       |
| G. Grinding or polishing stone?  | O. Rice sickle                                   |
| H. Axe head                      | Dotted line: Large hand-hewn<br>cypress fragment |





The hearth level of the chimney for structure one indicates that it was elevated off the ground approximately 69 centimeters or 2 1/4 feet. No evidence of brick footing piers was uncovered, but the round posthole approximately 3.72 meters from the center of the chimney (see Figure 22) may have functioned as a timber building pier. If this posthole represents the outer wall of the structure, then the width of this dwelling was approximately 7.44 meters, or 24 feet. The two small square posts to the left of structure four's chimney (see Figure 21) indicate that it was approximately the same width. Given a width of 24 feet, the length must be close to 48 feet. These dimensions, 24 by 48 feet are slightly larger than the dimensions given for most duplex slave houses. Dimensions of slave houses at the other Butler plantations appear to have been 20 by 40 feet (Roswell King, Jr., 6 February 1835, 1 February 1835). Moreover, Olmsted noted that the duplex family tenements on the Georgia rice coast were 21 by 42 feet (1968 (1856):466). Both Olmsted's and King's dimensions suggest that the slaves at Butler Island had a little more space available to them than the average slave family on the Georgia coast.

In 1811, 86 slaves were listed on the provision list for settlement #4. Assuming that eight duplexes were at that time on the premises, the average number of slaves to one duplex was 10.7 or 5.4 slaves per family unit. These figures correspond remarkably with the 5.2 figure recently suggested as an estimate for the number of slaves living in a single family structure (see Fogel and Engerman (1974:115). These figures also adhere to those given by Fanny Kemble for Butler Island (1961 (1863):67) and those of Olmsted for other rice plantations (1968 (1856):422).

The function of the irregular pattern of postholes located outside of structure one could not be determined (see Figure 23). Although only one side of this feature was uncovered, it is suggestive of a pen or coop. Historic sources indicate that the Butler slaves raised both pigs and chickens. Possibly, these postholes represent a portion of an enclosure to keep pigs or chickens fenced in. Postwar photographs of rice coast slaves or freedmen houses frequently show fenced yards.

One of the posts of the presumed enclosure intruded into another feature, which was possibly a fire pit. Charred bone and wood fragments were recovered from this feature. Such a fire pit could have been used for a number of purposes, including to ward off bugs, burn trash, wash clothes, or melt lead for the making of fishweights or buckshots.

#### Chimney constructions

The most detailed information regarding the construction of the cabins was derived from the chimneys. With the exception of structure five, all of the chimneys appear to have been constructed of tabby bricks. Even the clay brick chimney was found to have tabby bricks in its lowest course.

Tabby, a construction material used extensively along the Atlantic Seaboard in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been defined as a concrete construction-like material made from equal or nearly equal portions of lime, shells, water, and sand (Gritzner 1978:9). Like adobe and modern concrete, tabby bricks are not fired in the manufacturing process. Instead, the semi-fluid mixture was poured into brick molds and left to harden for a period of 6 to 18 months. Close

adherence of this procedure often resulted in a very durable building material (Gritzner 1978:36). The tabby bricks made at Butler Island evidently included shell robbed from prehistoric shell middens. This was indicated by the presence of burnt aboriginal ceramics found within the bricks.

Although tabby brick may have been a durable construction material, it was not at all fire resistant. The fire box of structure one was lined with clay bricks (see Figure 24). This has been found to have been the case with most tabby chimneys. In addition, the heat from the fire had apparently caused the hearth of structure one to buckle inward and to separate from the outer walls of the chimney. Thus the durability of tabby as a construction material for chimneys is questionable. Perhaps, structure five was made primarily with clay bricks to guard against the lack of fire resistance inherent with tabby bricks.

Two bond styles were employed in the brickwork, of the outer chimney walls. The "English bond" (Noel-Hume 1974:122), which alternates courses of stretchers (the side of the bricks) and headers (the end of the brick) was used at the base of the chimney. The above grade brickwork was laid in "common bond" (Noel-Hume 1974:122), that is, stretchers in every course for five or more courses (see Figure 25).

Perhaps the most curious aspect of the chimney is the arch-shaped support feature found below the hearth (see Figure 26). This architectural feature has been observed frequently at coastal plantations in Georgia on planter, overseer, and slave dwellings. Its function is unclear. It may simply reflect a shortage of bricks needed to complete the chimney or it may have served a functional as well as an economic

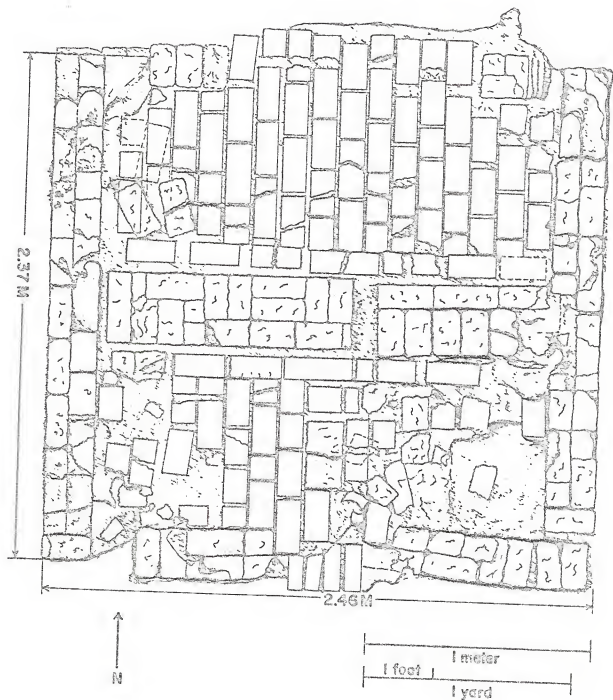


Figure 24. Hearth of Chimney.  
(Clay bricks: straight edges;  
tabby bricks: rounded edges)

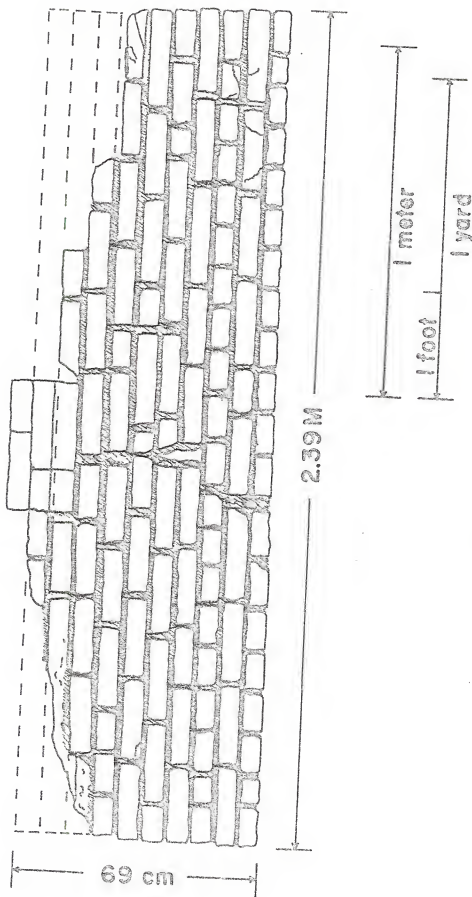
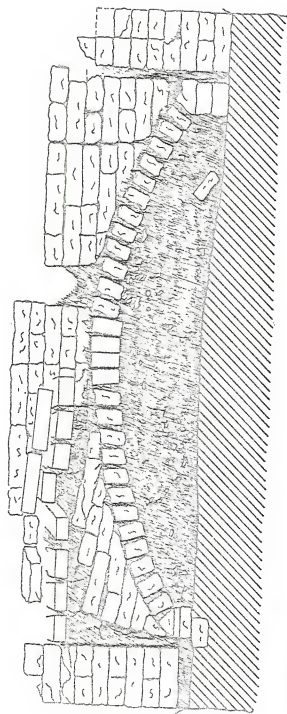


Figure 25. Chimney Brickwork.

Figure 26. Arch-Shaped Hearth Support. (Note how the hearth buckles inward.)



Grey Clay and Rod Flecks

Humic Soil

Tabby Brick

Shell and Tabby Fragments





purpose.\* Possibly, it provided additional support to the hearth. A similar arch-shaped feature was identified with structure four, but none could be detected with structure five, the clay brick chimney. Limited testing at the clay brick chimney may account for the failure to detect this feature.

Part of the arch was removed in order to uncover artifacts below it that would provide a construction date for the chimney. The only dateable item recovered was a sherd of banded pearlware ceramic, which establishes that the chimney had to be constructed after 1790. Because the diking of settlement #4 did not begin until 1803, the chimney had to have been built after that date. Unfortunately, the pearlware sherd does not aid in the refinement of a construction date for structure one.

The bricks utilized in the clay brick chimney are known as Savannah greys. They were given this name because they were made with clay found along the Savannah River drainage. Several plantations in the Savannah area had been engaged in brickmaking as early as 1750 (Granger 1947:9, 435). At Butler Island bricks were produced from the "swamp clay" (Roswell King, Sr., 20 August 1815), but bricks were also frequently purchased from Charleston and Savannah. The source of the bricks used in structure five could not be determined. It may be possible to tentatively identify bricks that were made at Butler Island. Many of the clay bricks used to line the fire boxes of the chimneys and used in the construction of the brick floor were very crudely made, low-fired, and with large grey clay inclusions. It is suggested that these bricks were probably made at Butler Island because brickmaking at the

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\*Charles H. Fairbanks, personal communication, 1980.

plantation was primarily experimental and never really became sophisticated. Therefore, it is likely that the very well made clay bricks used in the construction of structure five were bricks obtained from the Savannah River region.

#### Building hardware

Although more nails were recovered than any other artifact class (Appendix 2), few other construction artifacts could be positively identified. Most iron materials were severely corroded. These materials were weighed but provided few clues as to their identity. Two hinges and a small pintle were the only hardware recognized from structure one. Fewer construction materials were found in association with structures four and five. It is possible that some building hardware was salvaged and reused on other buildings once these structures fell into disuse. Additional testing, however, is needed to support this suggestion.

Of the 4,367 nails and nail fragments, only 4 could be identified. All 4 nails were classified as hand-wrought nails, including 2 rose heads, 1 L-headed, and 1 headless. The rose head was a general purpose nail while the L-headed and the headless were most often used for flooring or trimming (Noel-Hume 1976:253). The identification of hand-wrought nails cannot be used to assume that most nails used in the construction of slave dwellings were of this type. Although nails were made by blacksmiths at Butler Island, machine cut nails were frequently purchased, as indicated by the annual expense lists. Thus, chances are that a large portion of the nails recovered were in fact machine cut.

Virtually no window glass was present. This finding supports the general consensus that slave houses had few, if any, glazed windows. Windows were usually closed by shutters.

At least one padlock was found in association with each structure excavated. Structure one alone yielded three of these. Two of the padlocks had brass keyhole covers, which establishes a date of 1840 for their manufacture (Noel-Hume 1976:251). The frequency of these padlocks, particularly at structure one, supports the observations made by antebellum travelers to the rice coast, that slaves had to lock up their few, meager possessions because of the rampant stealing which existed among them (Olmsted 1968 (1856):432; Lane 1973:197). It is also possible that padlocks were used to secure slave houses at night to ensure that the slaves obtained sufficient sleep and did not spend time in nocturnal recreation (Genovese 1974:535).

#### Summary

Although a detailed investigation of plantation spatial organizations has not been undertaken, the settlement patterns of most large plantations were characterized by broad similarities. Apparently, this was also true for the plans of slave villages. Generally, both the internal arrangements of the slave villages as well as the location of these within the plantation complex were clearly functional. These functional attributes, however, appear to have exceeded specific cash crop requirements; therefore, it is difficult to identify plantation settlement pattern data which are exclusively associated with rice culture. At Butler Island tentative evidence of an accommodation to rice culture has been indicated from the slave community plan, but additional archaeological testing is needed to support these suggestions.

As for slave housing, the evidence from Butler Island conforms to that of most tidewater plantations at both cotton and rice plantations.

Cypress house constructions may have been found more often on the rice coast, but cypress was likely to have been used at the barrier island plantations as well.

## CHAPTER 5 THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF SLAVERY

The hypotheses outlined in Chapter 1 are based on the following three assumptions concerning slave material conditions in coastal Georgia:

1. Artifact classes identified as food-related activities, clothing, personal possessions, and leisure, reflect general conditions in slave lifeways which may have been related to labor management practices established for the production of tide-water staples. Thus, these conditions should be evident at both rice and long-staple cotton plantations.
2. The habitats where certain cash crops were produced will be evident in slave lifeways primarily in community organizations (Chapter 4) and in exploitable food and nonfood resources.
3. Tools, farming implements, and specialized crafts should be directly related to cash crop production.

In order to test these assumptions, it is necessary to refine the artifact groups indicated on pages 18 and 19. Functional artifact groups are used here which consider material attributes when appropriate. The following artifacts are included and are listed in the order in which they are discussed:

1. Food-related activities
  - a. Kitchen artifacts (food preparation, processing, serving storage, and containers)

- b. Food procurement activities (hunting and fishing)
- c. Food resources
  - 1. Domestic
  - 2. Nondomestic
- 2. Personal possessions
  - a. Clothing
  - b. Accessories and ornaments
  - c. Household items
- 3. Leisure-time activities
  - a. Tobacco equipment
  - b. Games and toys
  - c. Miscellaneous objects
- 4. Farming and specialized crafts

Obviously many of these groups crosscut categories, which is generally a problem with the establishment of functional categories. But to discuss these artifacts on the basis of material characteristics alone would be meaningless to this study. These artifact groups very closely resemble those established by South (1977:95-102) for the definition of artifact patterns, and his classes are used in Chapter 6 to derive a slave artifact pattern. Counts of artifacts recovered from slave settlement #4 are listed in Appendix 2.

#### Kitchen Artifacts

According to historic sources, food was prepared at central kitchens in each of the slave villages at Butler Island (Kemble 1961 (1863):55). Yet it is curious that kitchen artifacts form the second highest artifact class next to building hardware. Although most of

these artifacts were found to be ceramics and glass pertaining to food serving and storage, food preparation and processing artifacts were also found, which has been the case at other slave sites in Georgia as well. Presently, the archaeological evidence from Butler Island and elsewhere in Georgia strongly suggests that most culinary activities took place in the slaves' cabins and not at historically documented central kitchens. Thus far, no central kitchens have been identified archaeologically; therefore, it may be questionable whether they existed. Perhaps one cabin served as a kitchen for feeding slave children, who were often fed separately from adults (Genovese 1974:507-508), but archaeological evidence of this very specialized activity is lacking. At present, the archaeological evidence from coastal Georgia points to the slave cabin as having been the locus for most cooking and eating activities.

### Ceramics

More attention has probably been directed toward the study of ceramics than any other artifact class in archaeological contexts. Consequently, ceramics have become vital indices for the documentation of human activities (Fontana 1973). At slavery sites the following tentative patterns have been observed:

1. A varied range of types and styles suggests that slaves were not furnished with a special class of wares but obtained either planter castoffs of unmatched assortments of ceramics marketed for slave use.
2. Cups and bowls and to a lesser extent plates and platters are the primary vessel forms of slave ceramic assemblages.

3. As for decorated tablewares, annular decorated ceramics predominate, whereas the transfer printed styles are minority items.

Because these patterns have been observed consistently at coastal cotton plantations, it is hypothesized that similar ceramic patterns would be observed at rice plantations. It is assumed that slaves at both rice and cotton plantations had a similar access to ceramics and other material possessions. This slave ceramic pattern would suggest either that special purchases were supplied to slaves or that perhaps slaves purchased ceramics made available to them from local merchants.

#### Ceramic styles and vessel forms

For the most part, the ceramics uncovered at Butler Island were utilized for the serving of food or the storage of it. The exceptions are those vessels used for hygienic purposes. The range of vessel forms is given in Table 8. All the ceramics have been described in detail elsewhere and are very briefly summarized here.

Red coarse earthenwares. Red paste ceramics have been associated with dairy and general purpose kitchen activities. Their manufacture is well documented for New England and adjacent areas (Stradling and Garrison 1977; see related to redwares); Less information, however, is available for the South. In Georgia, these ceramics were manufactured in Savannah during the mid-eighteenth century, but the location of later kilns is not clear (Ketchum 1971:31). At Butler Island, three styles were identified, including unglazed, brown glazed, and black glazed varieties (see Figure 27). All vessels appear to have been used for either storage or some other utilitarian purposes.



Table 8  
Vessel Forms of Ceramic Styles

Ceramic Style	Vessel Form	Number
<u>Coarse red earthenwares</u>		
Unglazed	Storage jar	1
Black lead glazed	Indeterminate	1
Brown lead glazed	Chamber pot	1
	Large bowl	1
<u>Refined earthenwares</u>		
Undecorated whiteware	Chamber pots	3
	Serving bowls and cups	4
	Plates/platters	4
	Mug	1
	Pitcher	1
Transfer printed pearlware	Serving bowls or cups	2
	Platter	1
Edged Ware		
Shelledged pearlware	Plates/platters	6
Molded edged whiteware	Plate/platter	1
Handpainted		
Pearlware underglazed blue on white	Serving bowls	2
Pearlware polychrome	Shallow bowls or cups	2
Whiteware polychrome	Bowls or cups	2
Annular		
Circular bands		
Pearlware	Serving bowls and cups	8
Whiteware	Serving bowls and cups	2
Yellow paste	Serving bowl	1
Rouletted		
Pearlware	Serving bowl	1
Whiteware	serving bowl	1
Finger painted	Serving bowl	1
	Mug	1

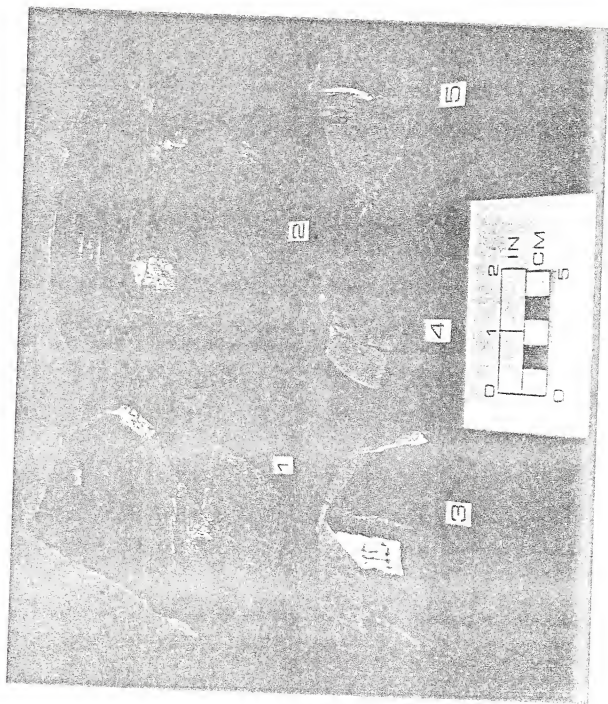
Table 8—(continued)

Ceramic Style	Vessel Form	Number
Mocha		
Whiteware	Serving bowl	1
Yellow paste	Serving bowl	1
Marbelized	Bowl and cups	2
Sponge decorated	Serving bowl?	1
<u>Stonewares</u>		
Alkaline glazed	Storage jars	2
Brown salt glazed	Storage jars	2
Low fired unidentified	Storage jar	1
<u>Porcelain</u>		
	Indeterminate	1
Total		59
<u>Grand Total</u>		
Bowls or cups	32	
Plates/platters	11	
Storage jars	6	
Mugs	2	
Chamber pots	4	
Other	4	

Figure 27. Red Coarse Earthenwares.

Key to Artifacts

1. Brown-glazed large bowl
2. Black-glazed chamber pot
3. Brown-glazed shoulder fragment
4. Black-glazed basal fragment
5. Unglazed lip of storage jar



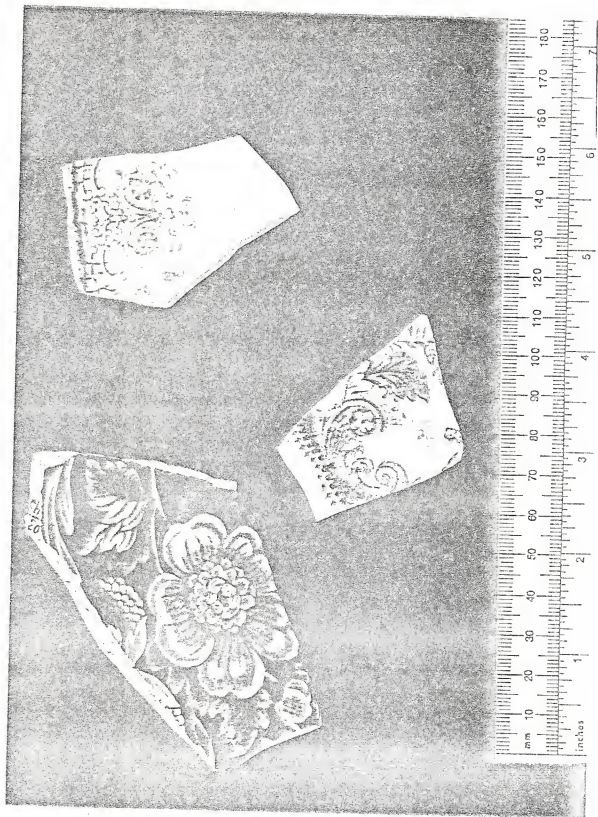
Undecorated white ceramics. The most frequently occurring ceramics were undecorated white fragments, possibly including creamware, pearlware, and whiteware, with most appearing to be whiteware. Those classed as whiteware were defined as such on the basis of a white overall glaze tint and by the absence of the blue puddling characteristic of pearlware (Price 1979:13-15) or by the creamy white color and greenish-yellow puddling found on the creamwares (Noel-Hume 1973:217-254). The undecorated whitewares are found in a variety of vessel forms. The Butler Island collection includes chamber pots, bowls, mugs, platters, and plates.

Transfer printed pearlware and whiteware. The surface decorations on transfer printed ceramics were mass produced by the use of copper plate engravings. These ceramics are one of the most frequently occurring at late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sites (Noel-Hume 1976:129-130). At slave sites, however, they appear to be minority wares, and are frequently associated with high status households. Only 17 sherds were recovered, but three vessel forms are represented: a platter, a plate, and a bowl or cup (see Figure 28).

Handpainted pearlware and whiteware. Blue-on-white and later polychrome floral designs were painted on plain white bodies. These ceramics seem to have been particularly popular among poorer classes. Beginning in 1835, bright floral designs were stenciled on these ceramics (Noel-Hume 1976:129).

Edged wares. White bodied vessels with embossed feathers, shells, or fish scales placed on the edge were usually painted in blue or green. Typical vessel forms are plates and platters, but other vessels are known (see Watkins 1970, Figure 3a),

Figure 28. Transfer Printed Pearlware Fragments.



Annular wares. Several decorative motifs are characteristically found on annular ceramics, often more than one on the same vessel (see van Rensselaer 1978:240-24). The motifs include slip banded circles, mocha, swirl, circle and cube, and engine turned or rouletted (Price 1979:18). Vessel forms include mugs, bowls, jugs, teapots, and tureens. At Butler Island, only cups, bowls, and mugs were recognized (Figures 29 and 30).

Spong decorated. Ceramics known as sponge decorated, or spatterware, consist of the application of colors to a white bodied vessel by means of an inked sponge. Plates, cups, and saucers are the most common vessels (Price 1979:19). Only one vessel was represented at Butler Island, and it appears to be a small cup or bowl.

Alkaline-glazed stonewares. A glaze made from wood ash and lye water was frequently applied to stoneware storage vessels in the South (Greer 1971). These were probably produced cheaply by small potters on the Georgia or South Carolina piedmont.

Salt-glazed stoneware. The technique of manufacturing stoneware in which salt was thrown in the kiln while the vessels were being fired resulted in salt-glazed stoneware. The effect is an orange-peel texture on the surface of the vessels. Most nineteenth-century salt-glazed stoneware was made into storage forms, including jugs, jars, pitchers, and bottles (Sammis in Stradling and Garrison 1977:112).

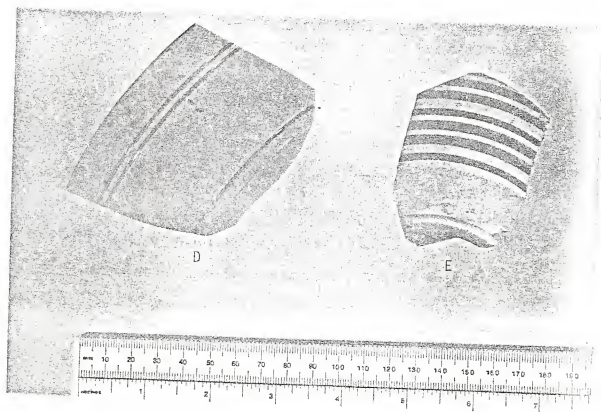
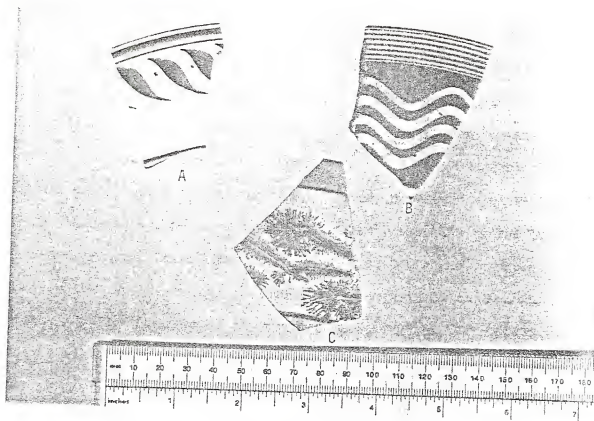
Porcelain. Generally found in all tableware vessel forms, porcelain is associated with high status households. One undecorated white fragment was uncovered. It appears to have been part of an ornamental vessel form, most probably salvaged from the overseer's house.



Figures 29 (upper and 30 (lower). Annular Ceramics.

Key to Artifacts

- A. Whiteware, black stenciled design  
with red bands on white body
- B. Rouletted with swirled bands
- C. Mocha design on yellow body
- D. Blue stripes on yellow body
- E. Circular brown and tan bands on  
pearlware body



As at other coastal slave sites, a variety of ceramic styles were found to be present at Butler Island. These assemblages seem to indicate that slaves received an assortment of unmatched ceramics. In the Butler Island collection some vessels appear to have been "wasters," those which have no market value (Noel-Hume 1974:170). Generally the wasters were found to be poorly fired, warped, or with a sloppily applied glaze. Apparently, ceramics were not regularly supplied to the Butler Island slaves, as these items do not appear on the annual expense lists. However, they may have been provided occasionally, and there are two references to the "purchase of 50 crates of crockery" (Butler Estate Papers, 1811; Roswell King, Jr., 18 March 1929). The size of this purchase suggests that these ceramics were for the slaves. How often ceramics were supplied to the slaves could not be ascertained, but it appears to have been infrequent. Most likely, slaves purchased their own crockery with money they earned from selling produce. Merchants in Darien frequently advertised the sale of ceramics, and indications are that these were perhaps special wares obtained exclusively for slave use (Otto 1975: 160).

While a variety of vessel forms was recognized, bowls and cups predominated (see Table 8). The frequency of bowls and cups strongly suggests that most slaves' meals were one-dish soup, stew, or porridges. A high frequency of bowls has also been observed at other Afro-American sites (e.g. Baker 1978). Baker suggested that the high frequency of bowls may be not only an artifact of poverty, but also an indicator of Afro-American cuisine (1978:81).

Of the decorated ceramics, the annular wares occurred in very high frequencies. At Butler Island, these ceramics comprised over 52 percent of all the decorated ceramics (see Table 9).

Table 9  
Frequencies of Decorated Tablewares

Ceramic Style	Fragments	Percent
Edged ware	53	20.78
Transfer printed	17	6.66
Handpainted	48	18.82
Sponge decorated	2	.80
Annular	135	52.94
Total	255	100.00

The high frequencies of banded ceramics at Georgian slave sites suggest that these were inexpensive ceramics obtained for slave use.

#### Dating the ceramics from Butler Island

One method to determine slave usage of outmoded ceramics would be to apply the Mean Ceramic Data Formula (South 1977:201-230) to those uncovered at settlement #4. Although the application of the formula to nineteenth-century ceramics has not been refined, it has been used to demonstrate the presence of out-of-date ceramics in another slavery context (see Fairbanks 1974).

The formula was applied only to ceramic styles of the Butler Island collection for which South had determined median dates of manufacture (South 1977:210-212). A median date of 1835.01 was derived (see Table 10). This date closely approximates the actual median date of antebellum occupation, assuming that the site was occupied between 1804 and 1861.

Table 10  
Application of the Mean Ceramic Date Formula to Tablewares

Ceramic Style	# of Fragments	Mean Date	Product
Whiteware, undecorated	217	1860	403620
Green and blue shelledged pearlware	48	1805	86640
Transfer printed pearlware	17	1818	30906
Underglazed blue and white pearlware	11	1805	19855
Underglazed polychrome	26	1805	46930
Finger painted	1	1805	1805
Mocha	10	1843	18430
Annular pearlware	91	1805	164355
Total	421	--	772541

Note: Mean ceramic date = 1835.01.

The application of the Mean Ceramic Date Formula to the Butler Island collection, unlike its application to other slavery sites in coastal Georgia, indicates that the Butler Island slaves were not using outmoded ceramics. Two factors may account for the difference between the Butler Island ceramic assemblage and the assemblages of the other slavery sites: imprecise dating of the whitewares and the absence of eighteenth-century ceramics. The precise manufacturing dates for the whiteware are unknown (Noel-Hume 1976:131). Their assigned median date of 1860 is at best an approximation, and the actual median date is likely to have been much later. Because dates of manufacture for whiteware are unclear, many authors do not apply the formula to these ceramics. The inclusion of these ceramics to the formula here, however, suggests that a satisfactory median date can be derived.

Eighteenth-century ceramics form significant proportions of slave ceramic assemblages at other sites, where the presence of outmoded ceramics was indicated by the Mean Ceramic Formula. The absence of eighteenth-century ceramics in the Butler Island collection could account for the derivation of a fairly accurate median date of antebellum occupation. Thus, the Butler Island slaves were receiving more stylish ceramics than other slaves in the area but were perhaps using some slightly outmoded ceramics such as the annular pearlwares.

#### Nonceramic Artifacts

Nonceramic kitchen artifacts included glassware, cooking and food processing equipment, and eating utensils.

#### Glass bottles and tablewares

The most abundant nonceramic artifact was glass, a total of 448 fragments having been recovered. Only 5 of these fragments were identified as tablewares, and two vessel forms were represented: a possible tumbler and a decanter or vase. The remaining fragments were found to be bottle glass, but no whole or nearly whole bottles were recovered. Table 11 provides the approximate style and number of bottles represented.

As can be seen in Table 11, dark green bottles predominated. This has been found to be the case at other slave sites. Dark green bottles are particularly significant because they were generally used as containers for brewed alcoholic beverages (Switzer 1974). Evidence for alcohol consumption among the slaves at other sites in Georgia is another household pattern observed in both cash crop contexts. It has

Table 11  
 Styles of Glass Bottles Represented at Butler Island, Settlement #4

Glass Color	# of Fragments	Bottle Form	# of Bottles
Dark green	317	3-hinge mold	3
		free blown	1
		dip mold	2
Light green	35	could not be determined	1
Clear	51	could not be determined	1
Aqua	40	medicine vial	3
Total	443		11

been suggested that alcohol was an item obtained by slaves, not one that was issued to them (MacFarlane 1975:117). The historic evidence for Butler Island, however, indicates that alcoholic beverages were occasional items issued to the slaves, presumably for medicinal purposes:

He drinks no rum and he can be left to give rum to the Negroes every wet morning. I think it will be profitable even if they drank 100 gallons [of rum] a year. The people have a number of discomforts that they would not get elsewhere. Scant of water, wood, little or no vegetable, we must make some way to make them comfortable & content. A number of them are given to swelling at times. I think rum is a good preventative. (Roswell King, Sr., 22 October 1803)

Alcoholic beverages were undoubtedly infrequently given to the Butler slaves. Nonetheless, alcohol was issued to them at times. In fact, some rum was manufactured on the plantation (Roswell King, Sr., 19 January 1817), and it is possible that the recovered case bottle

fragments contained rum made at Butler Island. Yet it is doubtful that all alcohol consumed by the slaves was issued to them. The overseers' concern about slave overindulgence in alcoholic consumption attests to this. Some alcohol was probably purchased by the slaves. Perhaps the light green "champagne" bottle (see Switzer 1974:23-24) was such a purchase.

Unfortunately, the former contents of recovered medicine vials could not be ascertained. A variety of medicines was regularly ordered for the treatment of slave diseases (see page 82) and presumably these were kept at the plantation dispensary. The remains of medicine vials uncovered from the slave quarters may have been plantation issues or slave purchases.

Whether slaves were issued liquor or medicines or purchased these items for themselves, the archaeological evidence indicates that they were regularly consumed by them. Although alcohol was possibly consumed for its medicinal effect, historical evidence indicates that it was used as a leisure-time activity, particularly during the holidays.

#### Cooking and processing equipment

Several curve-shaped iron fragments suggestive of pots or kettles were recovered. Two kettle legs, however, were the only diagnostic artifacts of cooking equipment. These were evidently legs to tripodal caldrons, which often weighed up to 60 pounds when empty (Booth 1971:38). Iron cooking pots were often supplied to the slaves for cooking purposes, and remains of these pots have been uncovered at other slave sites as well (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971; MacFarlane 1975:106). One leg was found in the hearth of structure four, which further supports



indications that the Butler Island slaves prepared their meals in the privacy of their own homes.

Several polished stone fragments were found within the slave dwellings (see Figure 23,G). Some of these, flat slabs of lateritic sandstone containing mica, appear to have been used for grinding,\* possibly to grind hominy into grits (Hilliard 1972:49) or for some wild vegetable items. Quartzite pounders were also found and were evidently used to crack items such as nuts. Similar quartzite pounders were found at Cannon's Point plantation on St. Simons, and it was suggested that these were perhaps taken from prehistoric middens (MacFarlane 1975:107).

#### Eating utensils

Fanny Kemble observed that the Butler Island slaves ate with broken iron spoons, pieces of wood, and with their fingers (Kemble 1961 (1863):100). Yet evidence of more substantial eating implements was provided by the archaeological data, including four spoons, two cutlery knife blades, and several fragments of bone handles. Presumably, the bone handles were attached to iron cutlery. The St. Simons slave sites have yielded very similar evidence of eating utensils. Four spoons were identified, two of iron, one of whitmetal, and one of pewter (see Figure 31). Possibly, the pewter spoon was a luxury item and a very special personal possession. The knife blades are made of iron and were possibly attached to bone or wooden handles.

The bone handles are perhaps the most curious of all the eating utensils (Figure 32). Although these resemble manufactured bone cutlery

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\*Charles H. Fairbanks, personal communication, 1980.

Figure 31. Eating Utencils. (A is a white metal spoon;  
B is a pewter spoon.)



A



B

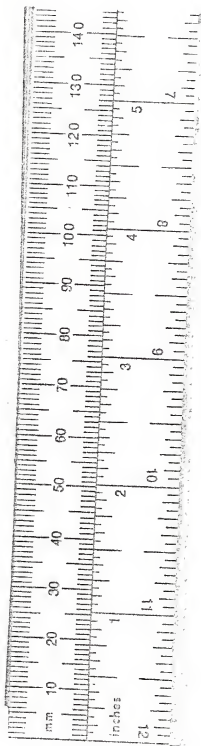
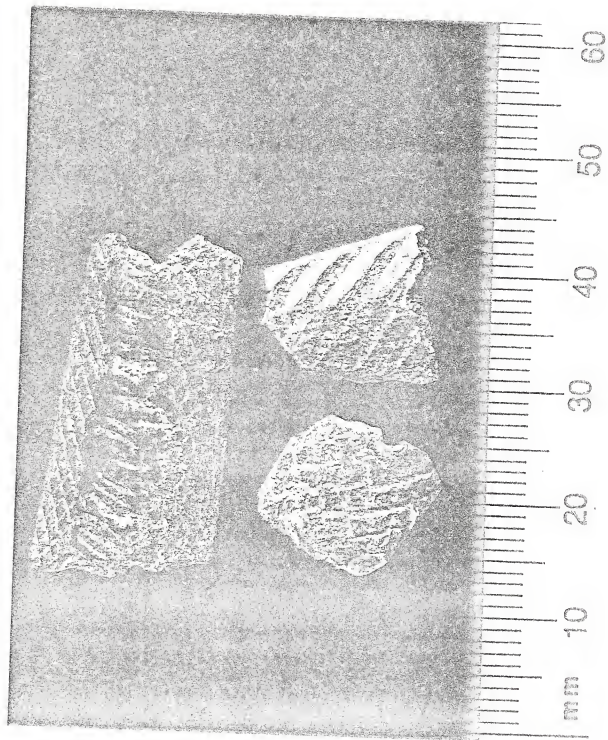


Figure 32. Carved Bone Fragments. (Note scoring in upper fragment.)



handles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Noel-Hume 1976:182 (8 and 9); South 1977:98, below), they appear to have been homemade items. Several uncarved bone fragments crudely sawed to form the same shape were later recognized within the faunal collection. Also, the fact that several woodworking tools were identified from structure one (the provenance of the bone fragments) provides additional evidence to suggest that the bone handles were homemade. At least it seems possible that the slaves were able to carve these bone fragments. The largest fragment has several scoring marks which evidently postdate the carved motifs. The significance of the scoring is unknown but may indicate later whittling activity after the handle was discarded (see Figure 32).

#### Kitchen Artifacts: Summary

The similarities in the artifact styles and the frequencies of the kitchen artifacts between Butler Island and other slave sites, notably Cannon's Point, are astonishing. These similarities provide a preliminary basis for the establishment of a slave kitchen artifact pattern for coastal Georgia. Subtle differences are evident. Perhaps the most notable is the absence of identifiable eighteenth-century ceramics. It cannot be ruled out that future excavations may uncover these. Another possibility may be that Butler Island slaves obtained more stylish ceramics than their barrier island counterparts. Their close proximity to the town of Darien may have been a factor which enabled them to purchase ceramics more frequently. Also, the barrier island slaves had resident planters and were perhaps getting their castoffs. But, in spite of these two differences, the kitchen artifact group tends to reflect a regional pattern.

### Food Procurement

Two categories of food procurement artifacts were uncovered: fishing equipment and firearms (see Figure 33). The only evidence of fishing activity was provided by lead net sinkers. Numerous fragments of lead slag suggest that these were melted down for making fish net sinkers, weights, and buckshots.

The archaeological evidence of slaves' access to firearms is perhaps the most significant conflict with contemporary accounts of slavery. At Butler Island, the evidence is more convincing than that previously recovered from other slavery sites. Besides buckshots, musket balls, and gunflints, a brass trigger guard was uncovered. To the author's knowledge, a trigger guard has not been previously found in other slave sites in Georgia. Fortunately, at Butler Island, the plantation records also indicate that slaves were occasionally given the privilege of using guns for hunting.

At Butler Island, a fellow asks me permission to get a gun for ducks. Plenty of which are at the landing and in the fields. I have sometime since taken all firearms from them as I think they have forfeited their charter from the swamps and their conduct. I am often glad my philanthropy in allowing them to have guns did not extend further than this.  
(Roswell King, Jr., 28 June 1829)

The archaeological and historical evidence is conclusive that slaves had access to firearms for hunting at Butler Island. It is likely that this was an established practice for other plantations in the area.

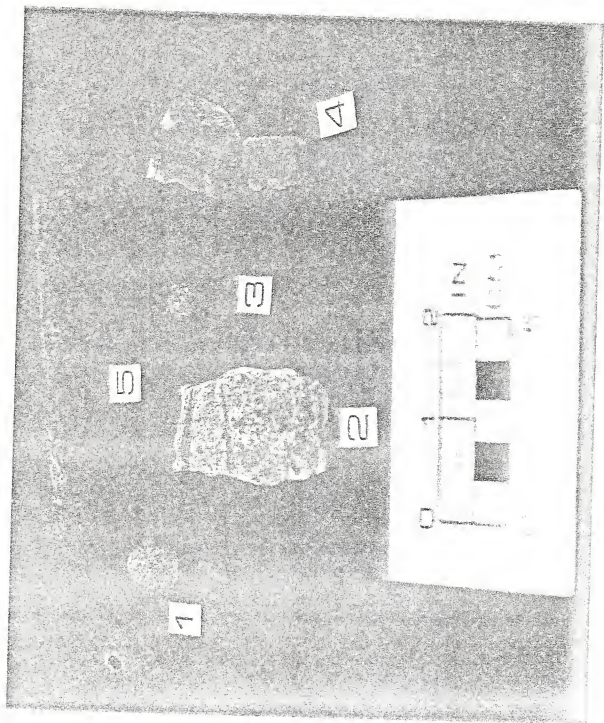
Gun flints were made from both black, or Dover flint, and French, or honey-colored, flint. Curiously, several large flint nodules of both black and honey-colored flint were found in and around the slave houses. Although little evidence of flint debitage was uncovered, it is possible

Figure 33. Food Procurement Artifacts.

Key to Artifacts

1. Lead fish net sinkers
2. Lead slag fragment
3. Buckshot
4. Gun flints
5. Brass trigger guard





that this flint was used to make the gun flints. Flint is not native to the Georgia coast. Moreover, black, or Dover, flint is found only in the Old World. Therefore, its presence at Butler Island indicates that it was brought there. Possibly it was obtained from nearby ballast dumps. Ballast materials frequently occur at coastal sites (e.g. Jones 1976). How this material turned up at the slave sites is unclear. A suggestion is provided by Roswell King, Sr., who indicated that the ballast was used in repairing the sugar works (Roswell King, Sr., 17 March 1816). If ballast was periodically brought to Butler Island, the presence of the Old World flint at the slave settlements would be explained.

#### Food Resources

Unfortunately, the food bone remains at Butler Island were found to be very poorly preserved. Although acidic, waterlogged conditions are favorable for the preservation of hide, leather, hair, and wool, bone is preserved best in alkaline situations (Cornwall 1958:69). The fluctuating water conditions presently found at Butler Island provide an additional unfavorable condition for bone preservation. Such situations are usually characterized by increased organic decay.\*

Besides unfavorable bone preservation conditions, a large portion of the collection had been severely charred, apparently by exposure to very hot, low-oxygenating fires, as indicated by the whitish blue color of many fragments.\*\* (Cremated bone often exhibits similar physical

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\*Larry Banks, Chief, Army Corps of Engineers, Southwestern Division, Dallas, Texas, personal communication, 1980.

\*\*Elizabeth Wing, Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Florida, personal communication, 1980.

characteristics; see Gejvall 1963.) Consequently, faunal materials collected are very brittle and fragmentary. However, the presence of charred food remains (not as severely charred as the Butler Island collection) in and around slave dwellings has been reported (Fairbanks 1974:87; MacFarlane 1975:167). Perhaps this reflects a refuse disposal practice in which food remains were burned in the fireplace and may have been subjected to repeated burnings. Periodically, the food remains must have been swept out and onto the floor.\*

Faunal analyses were conducted at the Zooarchaeology Laboratory of the Florida State Museum. As a consequence of the previously described conditions of the bone remains, most faunal materials could not be identified beyond animal class. Yet some classifications to lower taxa were possible (see Table 12). All bone fragments were weighed but not counted. Although charring and other modifications can reduce bone weights by as much as 50 percent, bone weight appears to be a more accurate basis for quantification than mere fragment counts (Wing and Brown 1979:126). Therefore, bone weight was preferred to bone count in the Butler Island collection where so much of the bone was fragmented. Here fragment counts would tend to misrepresent the relative frequencies of the animal species identified within the sample.

Yet, despite the limitations of the faunal collection, the relative proportions of domestic to nondomestic food animals, as indicated in Table 13, correspond remarkably well with the collection from the Cannon's Point north slave cabin (Otto 1975:310). Additionally, the identified nondomestic species are typically found in the deltaic habitats of the Georgia tidewater. Given the limitations of the faunal

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\*Charles H. Fairbanks, Personal communication, 1980.

Table 12  
Identified Fauna from Slave Site #4, Butler Island

Species	Common Name	Bone Weight in Grams	Percent
<u>Amia calva</u>	Bowfin	21.1	.96
<u>Lepiososteus</u> sp.	Gar	9.5	.43
Siluriformes	Catfishes	13.5	.61
Icaturidae	Freshwater catfish	23.0	1.04
<u>Archosargus probatocephalus</u>	Sheepshead	3.0	.14
Sciaenidae	Drum	4.2	.20
Unidentified fish		62.8	2.90
<u>Kinosternon</u> sp.	Mud turtles	6.0	.28
<u>Chrysemys</u> sp.	Cooters and sliders	13.0	.59
<u>Trionyx ferox</u>	Softshell turtles	14.1	.64
Unidentified turtle		252.5	11.50
Squamata	Snakes	1.2	.05
<u>Aythya</u> sp.	Diving ducks	2.0	.09
<u>Gallus gallus</u>	Domestic chicken	5.0	.23
Unidentified birds		25.5	1.16
Rodentia	Unidentified rodent	2.0	.09
Cricetidae	New World rats and mice	6.0	.28
<u>Procyon lotor</u>	Raccoon	2.5	.11
Artiodactyl	Even toe Ungulates	200.0	9.11
<u>Sus scrofa</u>	Domestic and feral pig	205.8	9.38

Table 12—(continued)

Species	Common Name	Bone Weight in Grams	Percent
<u>Odocoileus virginianus</u>	Whitetailed deer	12.0	.54
<u>Bos taurus</u>	Domestic cow	442.5	20.16
Unidentified mammals		867.00	39.51
Total		2194.20	100.00

Table 13  
Relative Weights of Domestic and Nondomestic Animal Food  
from Butler Island

Food Animals	Weight	Percent
Domestic	653.3	59.85
Nondomestic <sup>a</sup>	438.2	40.15
Total	1091.5	100.00

<sup>a</sup>Rodentia, Cricitidae, and Squamata not included.

collection, it is still possible for the purposes of this study to test the postulates regarding domestic and nondomestic food resources at slavery sites.

### Domestic Food Resources

In Chapter 3, the diet of the Butler Island slaves is briefly described (see Pages 67, 77, 82). The Butler family estate records indicate that this diet consisted of corn, purchased pork and salted fish, and occasionally rice and molasses. Chronic shortages of meat rations, however, were known, and meat may not have been supplied to the majority of slaves on a regular basis. In fact, the ditchers were apparently the only slaves to whom a ration of pork was regularly supplied. Most slaves seem to have been fed a great deal of salted fish. Occasionally cattle, sheep, and pigs were slaughtered to supplement the meager rations.

Taken together the dietary information obtained from the plantation records and the archaeological record present a confused picture of slave foodways at Butler Island. Although the plantation records indicate that the slaves had very little meat, when it was made available, pork was the primary domestic meat consumed by them. The archaeological evidence, on the other hand, indicates that beef may have been the primary meat in slave dietary remains; the relative weight of the recovered cattle (Bos taurus) remains exceeds that of pig (Sus scrofa) remains (see Table 14). The implication that beef contributed more to slave diet than pork is in keeping with the faunal evidence from Cannon's Point (Otto 1975:327-328, 332-334). Furthermore, beef often supplanted pork rations on many coastal plantations, particularly along the rice

Table 14  
The Relative Weight of Domestic Species at Butler Island

Species	Weight	Percent
<u>Gallus gallus</u> Domestic chicken	5.0	.8
<u>Sus scrofa</u> Pig	205.8	31.5
<u>Bos taurus</u> Domestic cattle	442.5	67.7
Total	653.3	100.0

coast, and these beef rations tended to be larger than rations of pork (Hilliard 1972:59, 130-131). Also, at Butler Island, more cattle was available than pig from the plantation livestock. Although some of the cattle included oxen, which were used as draft animals, they were periodically slaughtered to feed the slaves: "Buy 20 more steers to add to the oxen for Christmas beef" (Roswell King, Sr., 15 May 1813). The reference to "Christmas beef" may indicate that beef was only provided on very special occasions.

Perhaps the confusion between the archaeological evidence and the Butler estate records lies in differential butchering and curing practices of cattle and pigs. The pig remains identified within the sample included primarily mandible, teeth, and metapodial fragments, suggesting that the remainder of the pig was utilized elsewhere. While it is possible that the Kings kept the remainder of it "on plantations that were overseer operated, the great majority of the hogs were killed and

made into pork for the slaves" (Hilliard 1972:57). This meant that slaves were likely to have been fed the entire pig. Also, the plantation records for Butler Island indicate that this was often the case: "We have killed 5 bbl of pork this year [which] with the two you sent out will serve the ditchers" (Roswell King, Jr., 18 March 1821). Hilliard has made the point that antebellum connotations for the terms "bacon" or "pork" referred to much more than sides of a hog, often meaning lean meat free of bone (1972:57-59). If the curing of pork at Butler Island involved the removal of some or all bones, there would be no archaeological evidence of hams, shoulders, or ribs. Additionally, salt pork ("fat back") would not yield bone evidence at the point of consumption and was likely to have been the most common form preserved in barrels. The jaw and feet parts recovered may simply represent portions of the pig that were not cured but were given to the slaves just the same.

On the other hand, cattle remains also included head parts as well as humeri and scapula. These "shoulder roast" remains may indicate that the entire animal was slaughtered for the slaves and supplied to them as fresh meat. Rarely was beef cured in the antebellum South; it was most often eaten fresh (Hilliard 1972:44). References to the slaughtering of cattle at the Butler estate suggest that all of the beef was rationed to the slaves as fresh meat.

The point to be made here is not to underestimate the importance of beef in the slave diet but to suggest that the higher bone weight for beef than for pork may reflect differential usages of beef and pork. Pork, the major domestic animal food resource (as indicated by the



plantation records) was possibly cured more often than beef. In the curing process, some or all of the bone could have been removed, which would leave little or no evidence at the point of consumption. Beef may have been used more often to supply fresh meat, and the archaeological record reflects this. Moreover, it appears that the Butler slaves could have consumed all edible parts of both cattle and hogs, simply because a full-time planter was not present to receive choice cuts. The size of the slave population also suggests that this was the pattern. To supply 300 to 400 slaves with only the forequarters (heads, necks, tails, and viscera) would require that more animals be slaughtered than if a few whole animals were butchered exclusively for them.

Assuming that purchased pork supplied the bulk of the meat ration to the Butler slaves, it is questionable what portion of the diet the preserved food remains represent. Although purchased pork contained some joints, most of it was bacon sides (Hilliard 1972:58). Purchased pork, like plantation cured pork, may not be preserved in the archaeological record. Thus, it is possible that the domestic animal remains reflect only occasional dietary items. At least this suggestion supports the plantation records as well as the need to supplement plantation rations with nondomestic animals.

No goat (Capra hircus) or sheep (Ovis aries) remains were identified. Possibly they have been placed with the family of Artiodacyl (see Table 12). The plantation records indicate that sheep were rarely butchered for the slaves. Although Fanny Kemble apparently had mutton nearly everyday at Butler Island (1961 (1863):184), the slaves were evidently not as fortunate. In addition, few sheep and goats were

present at Butler Island before 1835, which predates Fanny's visit, and it is possible that the sheep and goat population increased after that date. But the archaeological record does not suggest that mutton was consumed by the Butler Island slaves.

The sample indicates that chicken (Gallus gallus) was a very occasional dietary item. A similar pattern has been observed at the Cannon's Point slave sites (MacFarlane 1975:165; Otto 1975:311). Chickens were apparently kept for the provision of eggs that were most often sold or traded to local markets. In fact, most slave-owned live-stock was sold rather than consumed by the slaves (Hilliard 1972:60).

Peach pits were the only plant food remains, domestic or otherwise, which provided archaeological evidence at Butler Island. A total of 82 whole pits and 62 fragments were recovered. Peach trees were present on Butler Island (Kemble 1961 (1863):167), but no references to supplying the slaves with peaches could be found. In this case, the archaeological evidence provided information not available in the documents.

The evidence of slave peach consumption supports the claim that planters supplied slaves with seasonal food items such as fruits and vegetables, which are generally not mentioned in the planter records (Fogel and Engerman 1974:111). The records, however, do indicate that the slaves were given some of the oranges and lemons from the Butler Island groves. Present-day fig trees at Butler Island, presumably dating from the antebellum period, may also have been used to supply fruit to the slaves. Both archaeological and historical evidence indicate that the Butler Island slaves were able to add fresh fruit to their diets from fruit trees available to them.

### Nondomestic Food Resources

Traditional historic studies of slave diet have tended to overlook the potential contribution of nondomestic food resources. A recent study of slave diet demonstrated that slaves residing within the coastal eco-zone were able to make their diet adequately nutritious. Primarily through the slaves' own efforts to supplement plantation rations with the abundant food resources available within the coastal environment, their diet was made nutritious (Gibbs et al. 1980). The study relies heavily upon archaeological and zooarchaeological data uncovered from slave sites in Georgia and Florida for evidence of food supplements. All of these sites were formerly barrier island, long-staple cotton plantations which lie within the marsh and lagoon section of the tidewater (see discussion on pages 20-22). Slaves living on these plantations were able to exploit a variety of habitats. Among them, the salt marshes form the richest portion of the coast, and the archaeological evidence from long-staple cotton plantations indicates that this habitat was most frequently exploited by the slaves (Fairbanks 1974:87; Otto 1975:345).

On the other hand, slaves on deltaic rice plantations were perhaps limited to the variety of species that could be exploited. The delta, being freshwater and to a lesser extent brackish, appears to have fewer species of wild resources than the salt marshes. It is hypothesized that the nondomestic species utilized by rice coast slaves would be food items typically found in deltaic habitats.

Table 15 provides the relative weight of nondomestic resources by animal class recovered from Butler Island. It indicates that fishes and turtles were predominant while birds and mammals were less frequent

resources. Even taking into consideration the grave limitations of the Butler Island faunal collection, freshwater fishes and turtles were very abundant resources in the delta and possibly were exploited most often by the slaves.

Table 15  
Relative Weight of Identified Nondomestic Food by Animal Class

Class	Weight	Percent
Fishes	137.1	31.1
Turtles	285.6	64.7
Birds	2.0	.5
Mammals	14.0	3.7
Total	438.2	100.00

#### Fishes and turtles

The three predominant fishes identified include bowfin (Amia calva), gar (Lepiososteus sp.), and freshwater catfish (Icaturidae), all found most frequently in turbid, stagnant waters.

The bowfin is a primitive fish of a large family, most of which now exist only as fossils. The bowfin has a unique air bladder which enables it to live in water unsuitable for other fish. It is a bottom feeder and usually inhabits weedy lakes and sluggish streams. Seldom is it found in fast currents (McClane 1978:178-179).

Gar is another primitive fish. It is primarily found in freshwater but has a high tolerance for saltwater. Like the bowfin, gar has a modified air bladder which it can use for breathing in very stagnant

waters. Gar is frequently seen near the surface of the water to expel gases and gulp air (McClane 1978:179-183).

Freshwater catfishes are known for their diverse eating habits. They are bottom feeding scavengers and most species are fond of turbid slow moving waters, the exceptions being the blue catfish (Ictalurus furcatus) and channel catfish (Ictalurus punctatus) which inhabit lakes and larger rivers that have clean sand or gravel bottoms.

The only two fishes typically found in saltwater were identified: sheepshead (Archosargus probatocephalus) and drum (Scianidae). Sheepshead are found in diverse habitats, typically inshore but frequently around off-shore reefs (Dahlberg 1975:73-74). Generally, they travel in schools and feed upon mollusks. They will enter brackish waters and on occasion even freshwater (Larson 1970:66).

Drums (Scianidae) are among the most common fish found along the coast (Dahlberg 1975:69). Although several species of freshwater drum are known, they are not found along the south Atlantic Seaboard (McClane 1978:194). It is likely that the drum represented in the collection are saltwater species which also occur in freshwater, such as the red drum (Sciaenops ocellata) or spotted seatrout (Cynoscion nebulosus). Both are gregarious bottom feeders found in diverse inshore habitats.

Although the two identified saltwater fishes could have entered the freshwater environment in the vicinity of Butler Island, their presence may suggest that the slaves were exploiting the more brackish habitats of the delta. Evidently, fresh fish from brackish waters were occasionally provided for the slaves.

This has been one of the hardest freshets in years. . . .  
The freshet destroyed much of their comforts. I have

been fortunate enough this week to give them a fine portion of fresh fish. 4 hands took over 300 bass and drum at least 4000 lbs., which when divided among them are smoked and cured and will last for weeks. (Roswell King, Jr., 14 July 1833)

The reference to both bass and drum in large quantities suggests that fish were taken from brackish waters, if not marine waters.

It is unfortunate that no surely identifiable anadromous fish were recognized. Anadromous fish, which enter the rivers during the spring and summer months and move upstream to spawn, include herring and shad (Clupeidae), striped bass (Morone saxatilis), and the strugeons (Acipenseridae) (Dahlberg 1975).

Assuming that the identified fish species can be generalized as representative samples of fish taken and consumed by the Butler Island slaves, a preference for fish found in nearby stagnant waters is suggested. It may be that convenience dictated this pattern rather than an actual preference, since these fish were taken probably from the rice canals, where they are frequently found today. At Cannon's Point, slaves evidently exploited nearby species rather than those more distant (Otto 1975:345). The drum and sheepshead may simply represent fish occasionally taken from brackish waters or they could have made their way into a freshwater environment. Given the limitations of the collection, these interpretations must remain tentative, but the sample does provide indications that fish typically found in the delta were regularly exploited.

Turtles represent the greatest nondomestic food resource exploited. The three turtle species identified are all semiaquatic species and are all found in deltaic habitats.

The mud turtle (Kinosternon sp.), only 7.5-12.0 centimeters in size, frequently inhabits quiet, slow-moving, shallow waters along

the south Atlantic coast. Two species are typically found in coastal Georgia, the common mud turtle (K. subrubrum) and the striped mud turtle (K. bauri). Both are bottom dwellers, rarely seen at the waterline, and are fond of brackish waters (Ernst and Barbour 1972:50-59).

The genera of turtles which includes the cooters and sliders (Chrysemys sp.) are found in freshwater lakes, ponds, and swamps. They are gregarious and are often seen basking above the waterline on logs. Their flesh is very palatable and is often eaten locally in the South today (Ernst and Barbour 1972:157).

As a result of its distinctive marginal ridge on its carapace, the Florida softshell turtle (Trionyx ferox) is easily recognized. It occurs in all freshwater habitats but prefers deep waters with mud or sand bottoms, and is occasionally found in brackish waters near the mouths of streams (Ernst and Barbour 1972:266-272).

It is not surprising that turtles are well represented within the faunal collection. All identified species could be easily procured in the delta. Mud turtles will take a baited hook or they could have been obtained with nets (Pope 1939:55), whereas the cooter and softshell might have been collected on land as they were migrating or nesting (Larson 1970:26). A local informant who was around during the last days of Georgia rice cultivation claims that "the softshell turtle and terrapin were frequently caught by rice ditchers."\* His observations suggest that the prevalence of semiaquatic turtles in canals and ditches would have made them easily obtainable food items for rice coast slaves.

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\*Rudolph Capers, Hofwyl Plantation Historic Site, Glynn County, Georgia, personal communication, 1980.

### Birds and mammals

A diving duck (Aythya sp.) was the only nondomestic bird identified. Ducks were apparently taken by the Butler slaves, as the plantation records indicate, but the slaves' accessibility to guns may have regulated duck hunting activity. Fields of planted rice attracted numerous predatory fowl (Austin 1893:34), and slaves were possibly encouraged to capture them at times. The rice bird, or the bobolink, (Dolichonyx oryzivorus) was paramount among these predatory birds. Perhaps its size (6 1/2 inches, or 16 centimeters; see Peterson 1947:209) and the fact that the entire bird, both flesh and bone, was generally consumed\* have resulted in no archaeological evidence of this food item.

Only two nondomestic mammalian species were identified, raccoon (Procyon lotor) and deer (Odocoileus virginianus). Both occur more frequently in the hammocks and salt marshes along the coast than in the delta but appear to adapt well to deltaic marshland. The raccoon with its varied diet could thrive on frogs, insects, berries, seeds, and eggs of birds and turtles found in the delta (Johnson et al. 1974:42, 85). The deer were possibly attracted to garden crops (Reitz 1979:78). Traps could be set to capture the nocturnal raccoon while, presumably, the deer were taken with guns.

The unidentified rodent (Rodentia) and rats and mice (Cricetidae) as well as the snake (Squamata) were probably not consumed and for that reason have not been included in either Table 13 or Table 16. In the South Carolina rice coasts, however, slaves have been reported to have consumed the rice rat (Oryzomys sp.), which they considered a delicacy

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\*Rudolph Capers, personal communication, 1980.



(Doar 1970:29). Whether or not the Butler Island slaves ate rats and mice could not be determined from the food remains.

### Summary of Food Resources

Despite the limitations of the faunal collection, it is possible to offer some interpretations regarding slave diet at Butler Island, particularly as these relate to the test postulates for this study.

The relative proportions of the domestic food remains were found to be very similar to those recovered from Cannon's Point plantation. This finding lends support to the hypotheses that similar patterns existed in slave consumption of domestic food items throughout coastal Georgia, at both cotton and rice plantations. Beef was found to be the predominant food item at both plantations. Although beef was evidently an important food resource at coastal plantations, the records for the Butler estate indicate that pork was the major domestic animal food supplied to the slaves. Assuming that the records are accurate, it may be that the archaeological record preserves more evidence of beef consumption than of pork, particularly if pork was cured and the bony parts removed and beef was served as freshmeat.

Plantation management practices may have influenced domestic food consumption. Because of the absence of a planter family at Butler Island, it is possible that slaves received all parts of butchered animals, whereas, in the case of a plantation with a resident planter, slaves were perhaps more likely to receive the portions of an animal that the planter did not want. The archaeological evidence is very tentative, but the presence of cattle humeri at Butler Island and the absence of such fragments at Cannon's Point do suggest that this may have been the case.

All of the nondomestic food resources identified are found in the delta section of the tidewater in either brackish or freshwater habitats, although, of course, many food resources not identified were possibly also consumed. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain which animal species were utilized most frequently. At the same time, fishes and turtles are among the dominant animal species found in the delta, and the faunal collection suggests that these were the predominant nondomestic species consumed. Birds, which are greatly underrepresented in the collection are also plentiful, but the slaves' ability to procure them was dependent upon their access to firearms. Also, birds, particularly ducks and other migratory fowl, are generally more seasonal resources than fishes or turtles. Consequently, birds may not have been consumed as often as the fishes and turtles. For the most part, mammalian food resources are more restricted in the delta than in other habitats of the coast. This may explain the infrequent presence of nondomestic mammals within the collection.

In conclusion, the archaeological evidence of slave diet at Butler Island and other coastal plantations indicates that domestic food resources played a greater role in slave diet than nondomestic food resources at both rice and long-staple cotton plantations. Yet the presence of nondomestic food remains implies the need to supplement monotonous and perhaps difficient plantation rations. Furthermore, slaves supplemented their rations with food resources available to them in nearby habitats.

### Clothing

Few references to slave clothing were found in the Butler plantation records. Cloth was generally purchased but sometimes was made on the estate. "We are making our own cloth, the cotton has been spun and Molly's son, James, put the loom up and we will weave it out" (Roswell King, Sr., 15 November 1812). Woolen cloth and slave shoes were also made from time to time. The only archaeological evidence for clothing manufacture, however, was a pair of scissors recovered from structure one.

### Buttons

Metal buttons were the predominant clothing artifact, with brass and whitmetal flat disc buttons being the most frequently occurring, particularly Type 7 (South 1964), or Type D (Olsen 1963), and Type 31 (South 1964). Of the total of 72 buttons recovered, 52 were of these two types. The sizes of these buttons ranged from 10 to 24 millimeters, which suggest that they were used for a variety of garments. Additionally, the frequency of the flat disc buttons may indicate that they were purchased specifically for slave clothing. In fact, references to "metal buttons" appear on the annual expense lists. The occurrence of the remaining metal buttons was sporadic, possibly because they came from clothing the slaves purchased for themselves. These "metal buttons" include two Type 32 (South 1964) and one Type 9 (South 1964) with a hand-stamped design of a person on a horse.

Twelve porcelain buttons Type 23 (South 1964) were found. Although it has been suggested that porcelain buttons were used for undergarments (MacFarlane 1975:135), it is more likely that they were

used for shirts and blouses. Nine of the porcelain buttons are plain white. Two of the remaining three are known as "small china buttons," one with a blue transfer print design known as "calico" and the other with a painted blue-on-white design known as "bullseye" (Luscomb 1974: 23-24) (see Figure 34). These may have been used specifically on female apparel. A dark green porcelain button identical to the plain white ones was also found.

Bone buttons form the third class. These appear to have been made by machine and not on the plantation. Three 5-hole Type 19 (South 1964), or Type J (Olsen 1963), and one 4-hole Type 20 (South 1964) were recovered. Bone buttons were strictly utilitarian and were most frequently found on underwear and trousers (Luscomb 1975:26).

Identical button styles have been found in all the previously mentioned slave contexts but in different frequencies—possibly due to variations in sample sizes. But the predominance of metal flat disc buttons at Butler Island seems to suggest that they were purchased specifically for slave clothing, possibly for both males and females. On smaller plantations, it would seem that slaves were more apt to receive hand-me-down clothing from the planter and his family. Yet the similarities in button styles indicate that slave clothing was virtually the same in diverse plantation contexts.

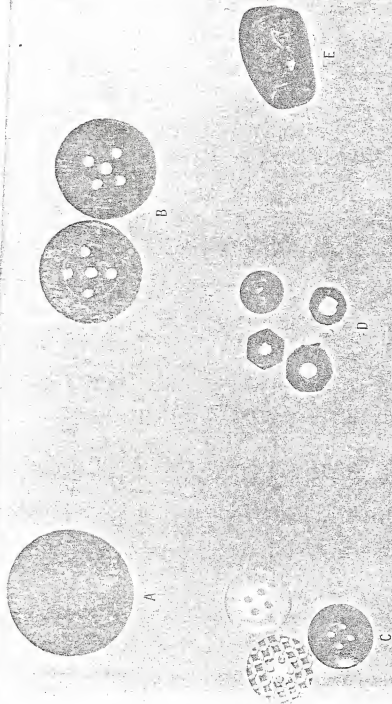
### Footwear

Fortunately, the preservation conditions at Butler Island have resulted in archaeological evidence of slave footwear. Slaves, both men and women, were provided with work shoes known as "brogans" (Stampp 1956:291). Three complete or nearly complete shoe soles and numerous

Figure 34. Clothing and Personal Adornments.

Designations

- A. Flat disc metal button
- B. Bone buttons
- C. Porcelain buttons (bulseye, transfer print, green)
- D. Glass beads
- E. Hematite bead



smaller sole fragments were uncovered. For this reason, it has been estimated that four shoes were represented within the collection. The soles all appear to have been stitched rather than nailed (see Anderson 1968:56-65). Thread fragments are still apparent in some of the stitch holes (Figure 35). Because they seem to be machine stitched, these are most likely the remains of purchased shoes and not homemade items.

### Accessories and Ornaments

#### Beads

Of all the artifacts within this functional class, glass beads were the most numerous. Blue, faceted, hexagonal beads found in several slave contexts in coastal Georgia and recently in Tennessee (Smith 1977: 157) predominated. In addition to 16 blue beads, 15 beads of the same style but in various colors were found, including green, purple, orange, red, and brown. Besides being found at slave sites, these cane beads "occur in great quantities" at eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Seminole Indian grave sites (Fairbanks 1974:90).

Three round, wire wound beads (Kidd 1970; type W1b17, W1b15, W1b12) (see Figure 34) were also collected. These beads, though of a style not reported at any other slave site, are probably contemporaneous with the faceted beads. Both bead styles were possibly slave purchases.

The most curious bead, origin unknown, is one made of hematite (Figure 34). While it may possibly have been brought from Africa or made by the slaves, it may simply be an item taken from a prehistoric site.\*

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\*Jerald T. Milanich, Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Florida, personal communication, 1980.

Figure 35. Shoe Soles.





### Miscellaneous Items

Included within miscellaneous items are a brass object, possibly a parasol attachment (Figure 36); a glass lens (Figure 37); a hard rubber tooth, presumably of a comb; and a bone handled pocket knife.

The brass object appears to have been part of the apparatus used to open and close an umbrella belonging to a female. This attachment and the little china buttons were uncovered from structure one, which provided convincing evidence of a female's presence at that household.

The glass lens is likely to have been part of a pair of glass spectacles, but its magnification is presently very slight. If not an eye piece, it could have been a lens for an unknown object.

The size or type of comb represented by the uncovered hard rubber tooth could not be ascertained, but it provides evidence that the Butler Island slaves had a few amenities.

The pocket knife is the only personal possession that has also been uncovered at other slave sites. Its occurrence at Butler Island and other slave sites may indicate that pocket knives were typically owned by slaves.

### Summary

The previously described personal items and those mentioned elsewhere in this study are very significant. Whether these items were obtained through purchase, stealing, or gift, they indicate that slaves made efforts to improve upon their material conditions. Assuming that the items were obtained through purchase, the task labor system is likely to have been a crucial factor for making the purchases possible.

Figure 36. Parasol Attachment.

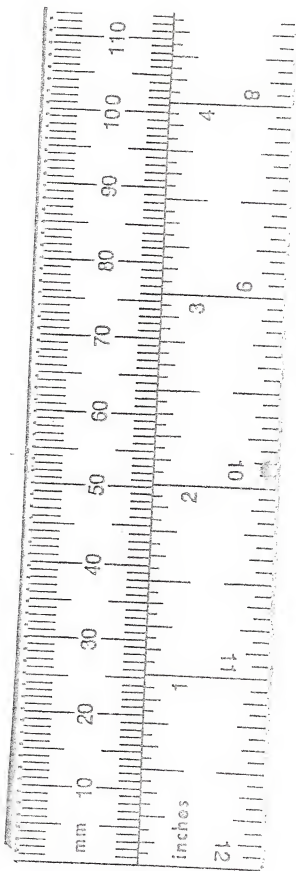
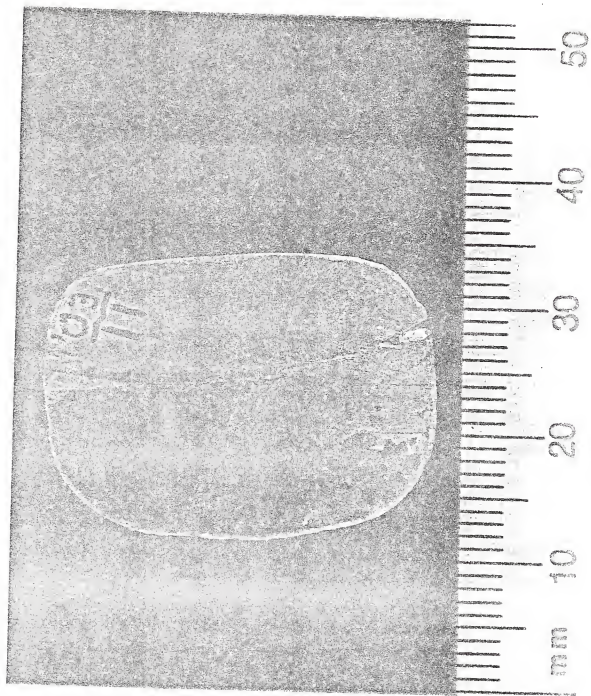


Figure.37. Eye Lens.



### Household Items

Items such as chamber pots, a pewter spoon, and furnishings are designated household items. Only one artifact suggestive of furniture was recovered, a brass drawer pull. Generally, the remains of furniture at slave sites have been very scant, implying that furniture was a rare item in slave dwellings.

### Tobacco Equipment

Tobacco pipes were the only leisure-activity artifact found, there being no toys or personal items related to leisure recovered. Numerically, pipes constituted the third highest artifact group in the Butler Island collection. A total of 642 pipe stems and bowls were collected, a number considerably higher than that found at other slavery sites (see Chapter 6). This may indicate that tobacco and pipes were periodically supplied to the Butler Island slaves and that these commodities were not supplied to slaves at the other sites. Both tobacco and "Negro pipes" are listed on some of the annual expense lists. Like ceramics and alcoholic beverages, tobacco and pipes may have been occasionally provided to the slaves, with the slaves making additional purchases to supplement the provisions. Here again, the close proximity of Butler Island to Darien may have made tobacco and pipes more easily obtainable than to slaves on the barrier islands.

Most pipes appear to be of British or Dutch manufacture. No American made pipes were identified. In fact, most pipes appear to be Dutch. The recovery of a Peter Dori pipe indicates that the site was occupied after 1850 (Humphrey 1969:15). Unfortunately, few of the other pipes could be as precisely dated. Fluted bowls were well

represented and several varieties were noted. A fragment of a "TD" pipe (Humphrey 1969:14; Hanson 1971:92) was identified.

All pipes were white clay with the exception of one which was brown and white porcelain. The latter was the only pipe with a detachable stem pipe bowl. It was presumably of German manufacture and would have been a fairly expensive item for a slave to have owned (see Figure 38).

#### Farming Tools and Specialized Crafts

All of the tools recovered were those to be expected at a rice plantation. Fragments of six eye hoes and one rice hook were the only farming tools, but a considerable number of woodworking tools were present, particularly at structure one. Such woodworking tools are also characteristic of rice production. The wooden tierces used for shipping rice were generally made at the plantation.

Included among the woodworking tools are an adze, an axe, a rounded chisel or gouge (see Figure 39), a number of smaller chisels, and a saw knife blade. Adzes and axes are general woodworking tools, whereas the chisels and saw knife are more specialized tools. The rounded chisel was used to make holes and the saw knife for shaping rough wood (Sloane 1964:54, 84). Perhaps the abundance of these woodworking tools at structure one indicates that the structure was occupied by a cooper and his family. This may explain the presence of some of the "luxury" items. Coopers, like other plantation specialists, were often able to acquire extra cash through hiring themselves out or by building items which they sold for cash (Kemble 1961 (1863):65). With the extra cash they were able to acquire a standard of living slightly above the field hand.



Figure 38. Porcelain Pipe Bowl.

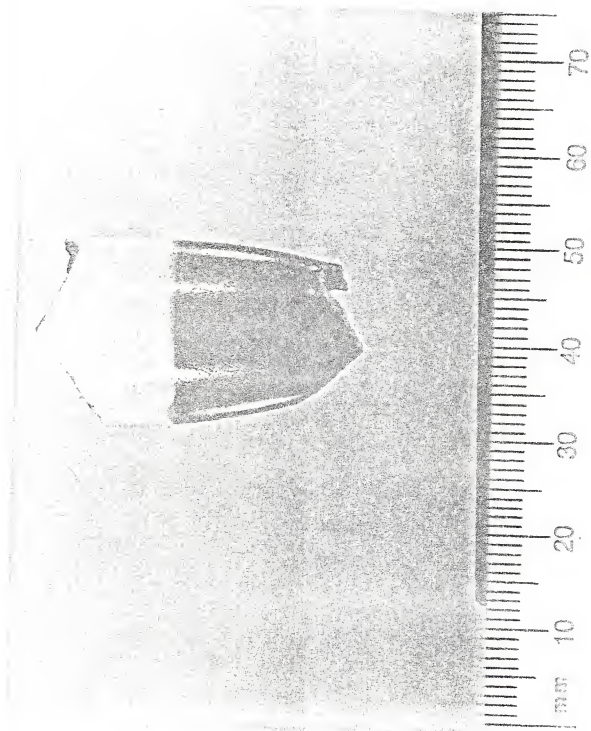
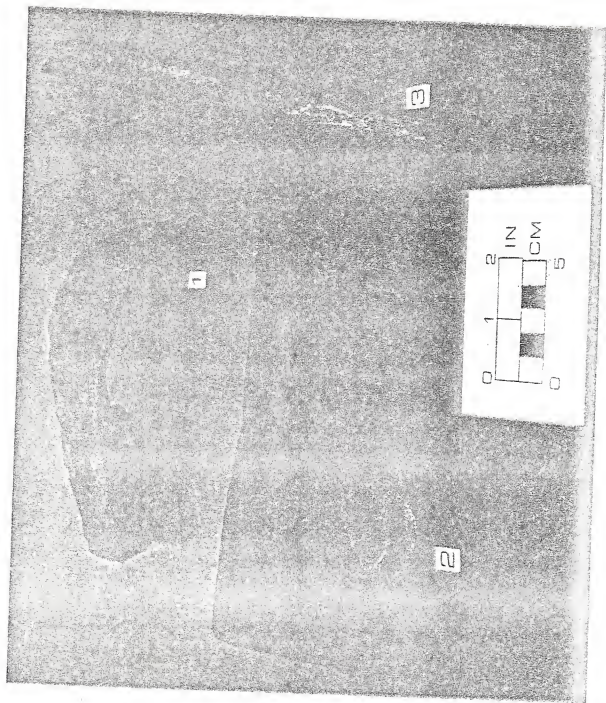


Figure 39. Woodworking Tools.

Key to Artifacts

1. Adze
2. Axe
3. Rounded chisel or gouge



Two tools, the function of which could not be determined, are shown in Figure 40. The first item is a thick U-shaped object. The other appears to have been used as a mold for making small rounded objects, possibly buckshot or fish net sinkers, but the function of the screw holes on each side is unknown.

It is interesting that most of the tools and implements were uncovered within the house. At structure one the distribution of some of the tools has been plotted (see Figure 22). The presence of tools within the slave cabin structure strongly suggests that slave dwellings doubled as draft workshops and tool sheds. Apparently, tool sheds were not available at the site.

Although woodworking tools were identified, no carved wooden objects were found. Thus far, very little evidence of slave crafts has been revealed archaeologically in coastal Georgia, yet the area is well known for its postbellum Afro-American crafts (Georgia Writers Project 1940; Vlach 1978). There are, however, some items at Butler Island which may be suggestive of slave craft activity, for example, the carved bone fragments. Also, a huge hand-hewn cypress log found close to settlement #4 was possibly smoothed down for the construction of a canoe or other object. The log was approximately 25 feet long (7.47 meters) and was found in the vicinity of the old antebellum dike. It would be difficult to demonstrate that this log was intended to be a canoe, but it appears to have been hand-hewn, and someone had begun hollowing out the inside. Assuming that this is an antebellum artifact, it is likely that slaves were responsible for it.

More convincing evidence of slave crafts is provided by the occurrence of three fragments of a crudely made ceramic (Figure 41).

Figure 40. Unidentified Tools.

Designations

1. U-shaped object
2. Mold for lead shot

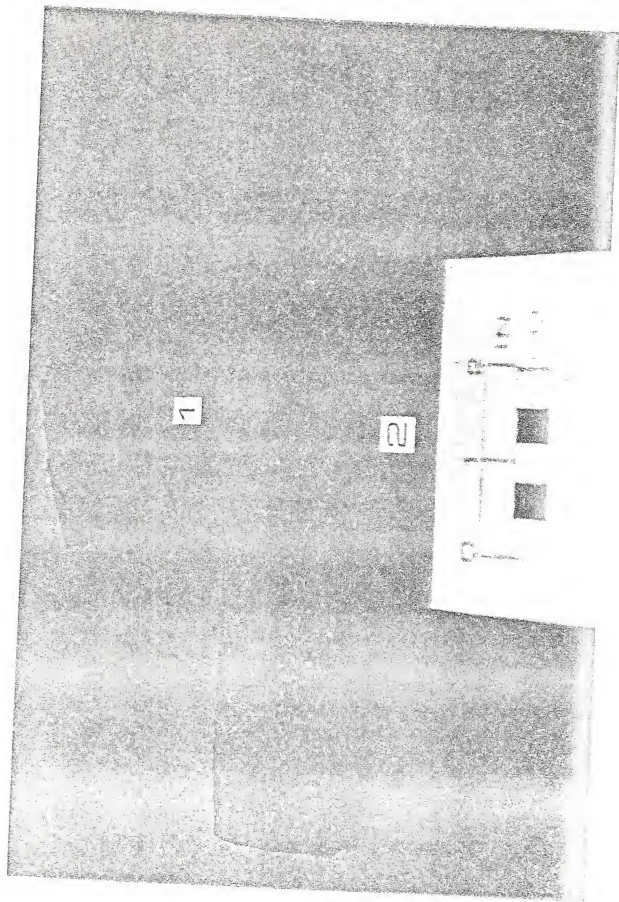
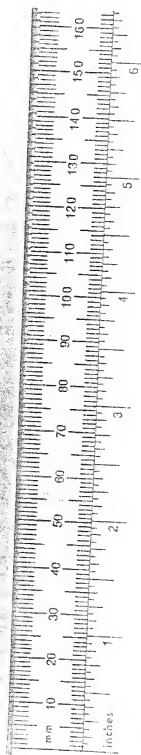


Figure 41. Slave-Made Ceramics.





The colono-ceramics which have been recently suggested to have been made by Afro-Americans (see page 12) are frequently found at black occupied sites in coastal South Carolina but have been nonexistent in Georgia. The ceramics recovered from Butler Island, however, do not resemble the sand and grit tempered colono-wares at all. Instead, they are very reminiscent of the St. Johns series (Goggin 1952) and other chalky wares in texture. It is possible that these are later manifestations of St. Johns, but the sherd thickness, as well as the vessel form, is strikingly different from the known St. Johns series. The vessel is suggestive of a shallow bowl and the makers seem to have been trying to imitate that European ceramic form. It is very likely that the slaves at Butler Island experimented with the manufacture of ceramics. Both the abundance of clay and the fact that clay bricks were regularly made there are conditions which would have prompted ceramic making among the slaves, assuming that a potter was among them. The manufacture of these chalky textured ceramics may have been another way in which the Butler Island slaves utilized the resources of their deltaic environment. It is, however, difficult to draw conclusive evidence from what appears to be one vessel. Thus, the suggestion that these ceramics were manufactured by slaves remains an untested assumption until further evidence is presented.

#### Summary

Most of the artifacts of slavery recovered from Butler Island are very similar to those found at long-staple cotton slave sites. Differences exist, particularly with regards to items directly related to rice production or the habitat of rice production (the delta).

Additionally, subtle differences such as higher frequencies of buttons, beads, and pipes may reflect differences in management practices or the fact that the Butler Island slaves were closer to local merchants than were slaves on the barrier islands. On the whole, the similarities in the artifact patterns are overwhelming, and it is suggested that these are regional characteristics in slave material culture.

## CHAPTER 6 PATTERN RECOGNITION IN SLAVE MATERIAL CULTURE

To demonstrate further that slavery assemblages from sites in coastal Georgia display regional characteristics, the artifact groups of four slavery sites were quantified and compared. Specifically, the artifact frequencies for each slave assemblage were calculated and the percentage range compared. Initially, it was intended that the examination of artifact assemblages would include all of the sites indicated in Figure 1. Unfortunately, the artifact data for some of these sites are not available.\* The sites used in this comparison include the previously mentioned sites: Cannon's Point south cabins (MacFarlane 1975), Cannon's Point north slave cabin (Otto 1975, 1977), Kingsley Plantation (Fairbanks 1974), and Butler Island. Although Kingsley Plantation is technically in Florida, it is located on a coastal barrier island and it produced long-staple cotton.

Another reason for the selection of these three plantation contexts is their differences in economic functions and plantation management. It has been pointed out that Butler Island was a rice plantation and the other two long-staple cotton plantations. Each plantation, however, was apparently managed very differently: Cannon's Point had a

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\*The analyses of Butler Point and Sinclair are presently in process (Mullins-Moore nd). Artifact counts were not published in the report of the Rayfield plantation (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971). The LeConte-Woodmanston plantation did not provide a slavery occupation (Hamilton 1980).

resident planter, and white overseers managed the estate; Butler Island had an absentee landowner; and Kingsley had a resident planter, and black drivers presumably managed the estate. Also, Kingsley was known to have been a slave importing station (Fairbanks 1974:63), which adds another dimension to its economic function. All three plantations had in common slave labor forces which exceeded 100 individuals and which were located in a coastal environment.

Possibly, the diversity of these plantation contexts has resulted in variations within specific artifact groups. Some of these were noted in Chapter 5, but the quantitative differences in artifact frequencies were not examined. Artifact pattern recognition attempts to examine frequency variations in artifacts from within intrasite or inter-site contexts (South 1977:99-102). Through such examinations patterned similarities and differences may be delineated (South 1978:228). These patterns presumably reflect the functional and behavioral processes which have taken place at sites. Thus artifact similarities occurring within slavery contexts are suggested here to reflect general patterns in coastal slave lifeways. Differences, on the other hand, may be related to functional characteristics of specific plantations.

South defined eight artifact groups for the definition of artifact patterns (1977:92-102). These include architecture, kitchen, arms, clothing, personal, furniture, tobacco, and activities. These groups are essentially the same as those used in Chapters 4 and 5, but there are differences which include, first, furniture and arms have been assigned to separate groups; second, glass beads are included with clothing; and, third, farming equipment, specialized crafts, and

fishing equipment have been assigned to activities. South's categories have been used because they may be more insightful for assessing the importance of personal artifacts, furniture, and arms. Also, the slave artifact pattern could later be compared with other ethnic artifact patterns.

Each site, however, was excavated by different investigators, and collection techniques varied. Also, artifact analyses were conducted by a variety of individuals. Unfortunately, very little could be done to correct for these difficulties, and it must be assumed that these differences have not severely altered the artifact frequencies. Most artifact counts were obtained from published reports. Occasionally, however, artifacts needed to complete the artifact groups were not quantified. In these cases, the author examined the original classification cards, all of which are located at the Florida State Museum.

Table 16 provided the artifact profile for each site. It reveals that the percentage range for Butler Island and the two Cannon's Point slave sites are very similar for most artifact groups. The Kingsley profile is very dissimilar with regard to architecture and kitchen groups. The raw artifact count for Kingsley's architecture group is considerably lower than that of the other three sites. This is possibly related to the fact that nails constitute a large portion of the artifact group at Butler Island and Cannon's Point, where slave dwellings were frame constructions. The nail frequencies at both Butler Island and Cannon's Point are considerably higher than at Kingsley. The dwellings at Kingsley were made from poured tabby and this explains why few nails were found.

Table 16  
Artifact Profiles for Four Slavery Sites in Georgia/Florida

Artifact Group	Butler Island		Cannon's Point, S		Cannon's Point, N		Kingsley	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Architecture	4494	67.90	3824	71.38	3789	70.60	754	34.34
Kitchen	1325	20.01	1388	25.91	1383	25.77	1384	62.97
Furniture	1	.01	5	.09	---	0.00	---	0.00
Guns	15	.23	2	.04	6	.11	10	.45
Clothing	111	1.68	45	.84	67	1.25	18	.82
Personal	5	.08	9	.17	3	.05	5	.23
Tobacco	642	9.70	71	1.33	107	2.00	15	.68
Activities	26	.39	13	.24	12	.22	12	.55
Total	6619	100.00	5357	100.00	5397	100.00	2198	100.00

To correct for the difference in the architectural frequency of Kingsley, a correction factor was added to this artifact group. The corrected artifact count and frequency for the architectural group indicated in Table 17 were derived by adding approximately the number of nails recovered, if the Kingsley structure had been frame, to the actual architectural count indicated in Table 16. The approximation for the number of nails recovered from a frame dwelling was derived from taking the average number of nails recovered from the three slave sites with frame structures. The adjusted artifact profile for the Kingsley plantation is given below. Admittedly, the adjustment of the Kingsley

Table 17  
Adjusted Artifact Profile for Kingsley Plantation

Artifact Group	Artifact Count	Frequency
Architecture	3950	73.23 <sup>a</sup>
Kitchen	1385	25.66
Furniture	--	0.00
Clothing	18	.34
Guns	10	.18
Personal	5	.09
Tobacco	15	.28
Activities	12	.22
Total	5394	100.00

<sup>a</sup>Corrected artifact count and frequency.



artifact profile by the addition of the correction factor may not be the best procedure to correct for the disproportionate nail frequencies. South makes similar adjustments to his Carolina pattern (1977:104-106). And herein lies the major defect with the artifact pattern recognition: It offers no real solution to the problem of extraordinary disproportionate artifact counts (Chance 1977:127).

Derived from the adjusted Kingsley profile and the artifact profiles from the other sites in Table 17, a slave artifact pattern is suggested, as indicated in Table 18.

Table 18  
The Slave Artifact Pattern in Coastal Georgia/Florida

Artifact Group	Mean Percent	Percentage/Range
Architecture	70.78	67.90-73.23
Kitchen	24.34	20.01-25.77
Furniture	.02	.00-00.09
Guns	.14	.04-00.23
Clothing	1.03	.34-01.68
Personal	.09	.05-00.17
Tobacco	3.32	.28-09.70
Activities	.28	.22-00.39
Total	100.00	

The slave artifact pattern reveals that the architecture group is the overwhelming group of the artifact pattern. This is evidently

directly related to the vast amount of nails uncovered from the frame slave dwellings. Also, it indicates that slave cabins have been the focus of previous excavations. Perhaps, if more trash or midden deposits were excavated, this artifact group would not dominate the profile. It also strongly suggests that houses were the material aspect of slave life, at least as seen archaeologically.

High proportions of kitchen artifacts have again been indicated. The proportion of this artifact group within the total slave assemblages further supports that the cabins were central to slave cooking and eating activities.

Furniture and personal possessions are very scarce. Although slaves may have been able to improve their material lots as a result of the task system, luxury items such as furniture and personal possessions were still hard to come by.

Firearms were represented at all the sites, but occupy a small proportion of the total assemblages. Perhaps this indicates that slaves had very limited access to guns.

Tobacco has the widest percentage range of all the artifact groups. As previously stated, this possibly reflects whether or not slaves received provisions of tobacco. At Butler Island, tobacco and pipes were provided occasionally.

Clothing is somewhat variable and could possibly be related to status of the slave occupants at the various sites. Presumably, a high status slave would have more clothing than a common field laborer. It is difficult to make such an assessment based upon such scanty evidence. On the other hand, the activities group indicated very little variation.

among the sites. Its percentage range suggests that few artifacts related to slave craft activity or specialized farming equipment have been uncovered.

The slave artifact pattern suggested here is very tentative as it only relies upon data taken from four sites. Differences in collection techniques as well as artifact analyses may have skewed artifact frequencies. In spite of these difficulties and problems inherent in the pattern recognition method, it seems that artifact pattern recognition can be a useful tool in making interpretations regarding Afro-American slavery subsistence patterns. Hopefully, future pattern recognition studies in coastal Georgia will refine this suggested regional artifact pattern.

## CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Butler Island data have suggested that the adaptations of slavery to rice culture are archaeologically discernible in slave community organizations, in the natural resources exploited, and to a lesser extent in farming implements, tools, and slave crafts. These patterns are presumably adaptations to the deltaic habitat in which rice is produced.

On the other hand, the archaeological correlates for slave clothing, plantation food rations, personal possessions, and leisure activities were found to be similar to those found at long-staple cotton plantations in coastal Georgia. Subtle qualitative and quantitative variations exist between the Butler Island data and those from other sites, but the variations may be related to differences in plantation operation.

While it is possible that these slave material conditions existed in other cash crop regions of the Old South, it is important to remember that several factors in coastal Georgia favored a distinctive development in slave lifeways. Paramount among these factors were local ecological factors. The abundant natural resources of the coast, both in the marsh and lagoon section and on the delta, were exploited for numerous subsistence needs. Additionally, cultivation techniques and labor management systems were adaptations to the coastal environment. Specifically, the task labor system developed from polderland construction of the

tidal marsh. Small fields known as "tasks" became the unit of measure for certain labor requirements in the cultivation of tidewater staples. This labor system, which provided slaves with the incentive to improve their material standard, was later employed in other cash crop regions throughout the South. Its origin, however, is clearly an adaptation to coastal habitats. Lush ecological conditions like those of the coast were not present in interior regions of the Old South, and the absence of these conditions in the interior was likely to have been reflected in slave material conditions. It is, however, possible that slave life-ways were similar in all coastal areas of the South, but this assumption will have to be demonstrated archaeologically.

Slave demography along the coast was another factor. The high concentration of slaves in coastal areas was again an adaptation to the production of coastal cultigens. The total reliance upon hand labor required vast amounts of slave labor. It may have been that in "black belt" areas slaves were given a few privileges, such as the use of firearms, that slaves in other areas were forbidden. This assumption remains untested, but it does seem that coastal slaves, particularly those on rice plantations, had at least the opportunities to manipulate the system during the periodic absences of whites.

Historic and economic factors were also found to have been very important. Georgia was settled relatively late by planters when compared with other tidewater areas. When the plantation system was just beginning in Georgia, planters from the older tidewater areas were suffering from rapidly depleting soils. Many of these planters came to the virgin lands of Georgia as a result. Major Pierce Butler was one

of these immigrants, and he became one of the wealthiest slaveholders in the South. In fact, the Georgia coast became known as a region of wealthy planters. Possibly, this wealth affected the quality of slave life. At least this seems to have been the case with the Butler estate. The Butler slaves are documented to have received items (alcohol, pipes, tobacco, and ceramics) which were apparently not supplied to slaves at many other plantations.

Regional interpretations of slave lifeways have been offered for the entire coastal Georgia area. Yet variations are likely to have existed. Variations resulting from habitat specific differences have been discussed. The proximity of plantations to towns or cities may also have been an influential condition. It has been suggested that the higher frequencies at Butler Island of beads, pipes, and stylish ceramics may have been related to the fact that the Butler Island slaves were able to trade more often with nearby merchants than were slaves on the barrier islands. Slave life styles in towns and cities have been documented to be very dissimilar to those on rural plantations (see Miller and Genovese 1974:337-452; articles on slavery in town and city). This finding, however, awaits archaeological investigation. In coastal Georgia, no urban or town slave sites have been archaeologically investigated, and none of the urban-orientated Savannah River plantations has been excavated. Therefore, it is not known whether the regional interpretations offered here extend to those situations. At the southern extreme of the coast, variations to the ceramic patterns discussed in Chapter 5 have already been noted in the St. Mary's River

district.\* Perhaps these variations are related to the fact that plantations in Camden County or along the St. Mary's River were exposed to more of a frontier environment than those of the Altamaha estuary. The St. Mary's district was settled considerably later and it is further away from the port cities of Savannah and Charleston than is the Altamaha district. It is possible that gradations in slave material conditions existed from the more urban-centered plantations along the coast to more rural ones. Thus, even along the narrow belt of the Georgia coast variations in slave lifeways existed.

Recently, it has been suggested that the unit of analysis for the study of slavery be limited to the county (Otto 1979). The county may in fact be the maximal areal extent for any regional interpretation of slavery. Still it has been possible here to tentatively suggest that regularities existed in slave life which exceeded both habitat specific influences or county lines. To suggest that these patterns extend beyond the limits of the Georgia tidewater needs to be investigated. Hopefully, future regional studies of slavery in Georgia and elsewhere will help to refine the suggestions offered here.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Butler Island study is that it has further demonstrated that archaeological data can provide information not available in historic documents (see Fairbanks 1977). Butler Island is a very well-documented historic site. In many ways the documentary resources outshine the very limited archaeological data recovered. Yet, in spite of the limitations of the archaeology, a

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\*Chad Bradley, Assistant Archaeologist, Kings Bay Project of Anthropology, University of Florida, Gainesville, personal communication, 1980.

number of findings were uncovered that were not only absent in the documents, but also, in some cases, were contrary to them. Clearly, archaeological data need to be incorporated with historical sources to investigate the slave subsistence patterns. It may be that slave artifact pattern recognition should begin with the establishment of artifact profiles from well-documented sites. Possibly, the artifact profile as well as the community organizations at Butler Island can serve as models for future investigations of rice coast slave sites.



APPENDIX 1  
SUMMARY OF SOIL ANALYSIS FROM SETTLEMENT #4, BUTLER ISLAND\*

Provenance

Zone A (Figure 15)	10YR 5/1** (grey) with/7.5YR 5/6 (strong brown) flecks; silt loam; crumb structure; slightly hard dry, friable moist, slightly sticky wet (soil acidity) 4.9; P (phosphorus) content 21 ppm (parts per million).
Zone B (Figure 15)	10YR 5/1 (grey) with/7.5YR 6/8 (redish yellow) flecks and charcoal; clay loam; blocky structure; hard dry, firm moist, slightly sticky wet; pH 5.1; P content 38 ppm.
Zone C (Figure 15)	10YR 6/1 (grey) with/7.5YR 5/8 (strong brown) mottles; silty clay; massive structure; very dry, very firm moist, sticky wet; pH 5.3; P content 27 ppm; contains old cypress roots.
Structure six	10YR 3/2 (very dark grey brown); loamy coarse sand; massive, cemented with iron oxide and organic matter (organic matter 12%); hard dry, friable moist, non-sticky; pH 5.9; P content 14 ppm; spodic horizon (iron hard pan) with old roots that have largely decayed or old earthen floor with decayed straw.
Drainage ditch (adjacent to structure four)	7.5YR 3/2 (dark brown) with/7.5R 3/8 (dark red) pigment chunks (possibly old paint pigment); silty clay; massive structure; slightly hard dry, friable moist, slightly sticky wet; pH 5.5; P content 135 ppm; organic matter 20%; high P and organic matter suggest old privy but test for human coliform bacteria was negative.

\*Robert F. Fisher, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida, Gainesville, written communication.

\*\*Moist Munsell colors.

APPENDIX 2  
SLAVE SUBSISTENCE ARTIFACTS FROM SETTLEMENT #4

Artifact Class	# of Items
Building hardware	
Nails and spikes	4468
Hinges	3
Pintle	1
Padlocks	5
Window glass	17
Total	4494
Farming tools and equipment	
Hoes	6
Chisels	5
Gouge or rounded chisel	1
Saw knife blade	1
Axe head	1
Adze	1
File	1
Sickle	1
Unidentified objects (Figure 40)	2
Total	19
Food procurement equipment	
Gun flints	6
Buckshots and musket balls	3
Trigger guard	1
Fish net sinkers	4
Total	19
Food preparation and serving equipment	
Kettle legs	2
Grinding stone	5
Spoons	
Pewter	1
Iron	2
Whitemetal handle	1

Artifact Class	# of Items
Cutlery	
Bone handles	4
Knife blades	2
Ceramics	
Coarse red earthenwares	
Unglazed	2
Black lead glazed	13
Brown lead glazed	13
Colono-ceramics (slave made)	3
Refined earthenwares	
Unclassified white	298
Whiteware, undecorated	217
Transfer print, pearlware	17
Edged ware	
Shelldged pearlware	48
Molded pearlware	5
Handpainted	
Pearlware underglazed blue on white	11
Pearlware polychrome	26
Whiteware polychrome	11
Annular	
Circular bands	
Pearlware	87
Whiteware	28
Yellow paste	2
Rouletted	
Pearlware	2
Whiteware	2
Finger painted	
Pearlware	1
Whiteware	1
Mocha	
Whiteware	9
Yellow paste	1
Marbelized	2
Sponge decorated	2
Stonewares	
Alkaline glazed	22
Brown salt glazed	15
Unidentified	10
Porcelain	1
Unidentified	1
Total ceramics	963
Glassware	
Dark green	317
Light green	35

Artifact Class	# of Items
Clear	
Bottle	51
Tableware	5
Aqua	40
Total glassware	448
Clothing, adornments, and personal possessions	
Buttons	
Porcelain	12
Bone	4
Brass	56
Beads, glass	
Hexagonal, faceted	32
Round, wire-wound	3
Beads, hematite	1
Total	36
Miscellaneous items	
Shoe soles (reconstructed)	4
Parasol attachment	1
Comb tooth	1
Pocket knife	1
Scissors	1
Tobacco equipment	
White clay pipes	
Stems	236
Bowls	
Plain	154
Decorated	251
Porcelain	1
Total tobacco equipment	642
Floral	
Peach pits	
Whole	82
Fragments	62
Furniture	
Brass drawer pull	1

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN REFERENCES

- BFPC Butler Family Papers Collection #1447  
GHS Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia  
MDCC Margaret Davis Cate Collection  
PHS Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
WFPC Wister Family Papers Collection (Butler Section)

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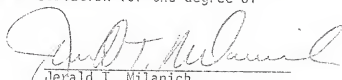
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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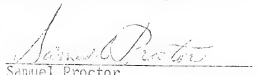
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